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MAUROIS

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CAPTAINS AND KINGS

ANDRE MAUROIS

CAPTAINS AND KINGS

By ANDRE MAUROIS

Author of "ARIEL"

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IN MEMORIAM
J. A.—M.

DIALOGUE THE FIRST

There are two kinds of causes: one necessary, the other divine.

—PLATO.

CHARACTERS

THE PHILOSOPHER, *Monsieur R——, Professor of Philosophy in a Paris Lycée.*

THE LIEUTENANT, *Lieutenant C——, of the 7th Dragoons, commanding the military post at Bou Salah.*

CAPTAINS AND KINGS

AT THE PHILOSOPHER'S,
THE 20TH OF APRIL, 1923.

(THE LIEUTENANT *rings at* THE PHILOSOPHER'S *door.* THE PHILOSOPHER *comes to open it in person.*)

THE PHILOSOPHER (*looking very pleased*). Ah! behold the Conqueror!

THE LIEUTENANT. The Conqueror, my very dear master, is just home from Marrakech, which others conquered, and he is rubbing his eyes to find himself back in a Christian land. . . . I came by air, and the change is sudden.

THE PHILOSOPHER (*ushering him in*). Your visits are rare, and as precious as they are rare. Ever since the war snatched us away from our classes at Saint-Louis, con-

verting the pupil into an officer, and the tutor into a trooper, I have barely set eyes on you three times. Yet, when the bell went just now, it was you I had in mind.

THE LIEUTENANT. I could have said the same thing, many a time, about you, if you had come in upon me unawares out there. Often, of an evening, I pick up one of your books, stretch myself out on a rug alongside my dog and try a fall with you in argument. The longer I live, the less I am disposed to share your ideas, but the more I admire your character; and character is the thing that really matters. How was it you were thinking of me?

(THE PHILOSOPHER *sits down near the fire.* THE LIEUTENANT *remains standing, his back against the mantelpiece.*)

THE PHILOSOPHER. Well, in my case, too, it was a book that made me wish you were here. The author discusses army matters, and particularly the high command, in a very sceptical spirit. You are aware

that I served as a territorial in this war. The comic relief unconsciously provided by the leaders I find frightfully amusing. I like Tolstoi's Koutousow, who sleeps all through the war councils, and wins the day by sheer immobility. I like the Joffre that Pierrefeu draws, Joffre and his impressive inertia. But I mistrust my judgment when my passions and prejudices come into the case. Although, in my heart, I wanted my author to be in the right, I kept on asking myself to-night: "What would the Conqueror say about it? Wouldn't he discover a telling argument or two on the other side?" And then I started looking for them myself. But now you are here I can put a stop to this duel between my cerebral lobes and become the Devil's Advocate out and out.

THE LIEUTENANT (*sitting down opposite* THE PHILOSOPHER). What says the Devil?

THE PHILOSOPHER. He says that, in war, Chance is the supreme arbiter; that the gen-

erals propose and the Fates dispose. He shows that, because of some accident impossible to foresee, the wisest plans may miscarry and the clumsiest win the day. He says that military genius is but a fond illusion of nervous civilians, and that a mere baby could take in the laws of strategy. He says that it is a queer notion to expect a great general to be at the same time a great intellect. Can you imagine a simpler calling? There are never more than four solutions to select from: you stop where you are, you beat a retreat, you break through the centre, or you turn the flank. But this penury is skilfully veiled by an opulent technical vocabulary. During the war, I came across some articles by some strategical expert or other. "Take a line X Y," he wrote, "with an army 'A' on one side of it and an army 'B' on the other. Anyone used to dealing with these problems will at once perceive that, for the two armies to come into contact, the line X Y must be crossed by one of them." I

know of nothing more characteristically military than the air of pedantic finality with which these elementary truths are enunciated. Before such panoplied platitudes, the civilian mind is impressed indeed.

THE LIEUTENANT (*smiling*). Don't you think that every art, and not only the military art, would look just as puerile if you tried to reduce it to a set of formulæ. You take me unawares, and the matter requires reflection, but, divested of their accidental circumstances, how many different plots has a novelist got to choose from? A dozen, do you suppose? What is *Madame Bovary*? The story of an erring wife. What is *Anna Karenina*? The story of an erring wife. And Tannenberg? Another Cannæ. And the battle Weygand fought in Poland? Another battle of the Marne. Yet Tannenberg is as different from Cannæ as Madame Bovary is from Anna Karenina. "A simple art; all depends on how it's put into execution," Napoleon tells you. But isn't that

true of all arts? What do you expect to find in a treatise on Painting? Phrases about pigments spread over a flat surface. Is that any more valuable than a treatise on the offensive and defensive in warfare? It is the painter who makes the picture, just as it is the general who makes the battle. Have you read *Les Thibault*? It describes how an operation is performed on the spur of the moment by a man who was a born surgeon. He uses quite ordinary things: a plank, a pair of ordinary household scissors, pincers, a paraffin lamp; but he does the job and makes a success of it under conditions in which others would have hesitated or hopelessly bungled it. That, it seems to me, sums up the whole business. There are men who achieve whatever they set their hands to, men who, wherever they go, bring with them order, clarity and success. And there are others who, just as inevitably, bring disaster. There is nothing more remote from the idea of Chance than that. Chance distributes

good luck and bad luck more or less evenly to everyone. But some characters seize all their opportunities, and profit by them; others will let ten slip by. Chance would give success and defeat sometimes to one general, sometimes to another. But Cæsar won fifty battles.

THE PHILOSOPHER. That wants thinking about. Cæsar tells us only what he wants us to know. It is quite likely that in Rome itself more than one disgruntled centurion would have said: "Cæsar? A man who had luck. I saw him at the Rubicon. He was all nerves. As for Gaul, why it was Labienus and the humble legionary who did the job."

THE LIEUTENANT. In answer to that this is what Napoleon says, "It was not the Roman army, it was Cæsar who conquered Gaul"; and I will try to prove to you that it was so in a minute. But why go so far afield for examples. Have we not known, during this very war, leaders who succeeded

and leaders who were foredoomed to failure? There were colonels who always went straight for their objective; there were others who never did. Men like Pétain, Mangin, Fayolle, got on because, other things being equal, they obtained more results than the rest. In 1914, Pétain was a colonel, Fayolle a half-pay brigadier. It was not Chance that drew them out into the limelight. Nor was it favour. On the contrary, Pétain had an awkward temper, and his brusqueness occasionally gave offence. Only, when danger is on the top of us, we pouch our pride and call on the blunt but efficient man to take the reins. Look at Gallieni. He was first in Senegal, where he succeeded. He was ordered to Tonkin; again he made good. Madagascar was in revolt; he was sent out there, and he pacified the island. Chance, say you? Well then, grant that it was just as much by chance that Newton solved his problems.

Do you know the story of the astronomer

Kepler and his wife? She was putting the soup on the table. "Do you think," said Kepler, like one in a dream, "do you think it possible that Chance, having at its disposal for its atomic permutations and combinations, infinite time and infinite space, will some day bring together cabbages, carrots, turnips, and make them into a soup like this soup of yours?" "Not so good, that's a certainty," answered the worthy dame, "nor so well-seasoned as this." I hold with Madame Kepler. When I see good soup, I praise the housewife; when I see a fine battle, I ask for the general. Shall I give you a conspicuous example of what one man can do? Look at Weygand in Poland. The Russian success was complete. Warsaw was threatened; the Dantzig line was on the point of being cut. Along comes Weygand. A week later the position was restored and the Russians were in full retreat. Is that Chance, too? Not a bit of it; for we can see how the deliverance was

engineered. True, your author would say that the engineering was simple enough. Weygand adopted the classic solution: hold your enemy in front of you, get together a flying column and fall upon his flank. But in war the plan doesn't so much matter; the execution of it is the thing. Weygand planned, and acted on his plan, with sufficient rapidity to get the enemy on the run before it was too late. His arrival in Poland created no new resources. Material was not lacking, nor men, nor courage. What was lacking was a leader, a Weygand. "It was not the Roman army, it was Cæsar who conquered Gaul."

THE PHILOSOPHER. But, O beloved Soldier, by what mysterious signs, by what special virtues do you recognize a leader? Is success the only criterion? Shall we say that Weygand made the victory, or that the victory made Weygand? Consider, in your turn, the case of the Duke of Wellington. Up to the time of his death the English

looked on him as the type of all that a leader should be, the dispenser of the national welfare, the iron fetich, the living statue of nails, as Hindenburg became later on. Now, suppose he had been defeated at Waterloo. What wouldn't people have said about his faulty dispositions, his pig-headedness, his negligence? "Why," his indignant civilian critics would have exclaimed, "why did he separate from Blucher? A baby could have foreseen that the latter would be defeated." And then that ball the night before the battle. Was there ever a finer example of the "Damn-the-consequences" spirit at Headquarters? But Wellington won, and the historians belaud his genius. Wouldn't they be better advised to call it his good luck?

THE LIEUTENANT. I don't at all think that success alone, and particularly a solitary success, reveals a leader. The proof is that Waterloo has in no wise modified my admiration for Napoleon as a military leader. It

was a grave political blunder—alas, it was not his only one!—on the part of Napoleon as head of the State, but the quality of his generalship remains unimpaired. The most brilliant card-player may lose a rubber. The best of generals may lose a battle. There are obstacles which it is impossible to foresee, and against which the most skilfully conceived attack shatters itself in vain. But the real leader is revealed in defeat no less than in victory. Hannibal was never more admirable than in those latter years in Italy when, "with head bloody but unbowed," he continued his hopeless struggle against the Romans with their endless stream of reinforcements. And Chanzy, battered, fiery, sublime, gathering round him his little dauntless band of die-hards, what say you of him? The Archduke Charles, pitted against Napoleon, was a fine loser, and so was William of Orange standing up to Luxembourg, and so also was Von Kluck when, turned upon by Joffre, he re-

adjusted in a single night his whole plan of advance. No, it is assuredly not by victory alone that we are enabled to recognize a leader; but what I do maintain, and what I always shall maintain, in spite of you and your Devil, is that, given the same circumstances and the same resources to draw upon, your great soldier will succeed where your lesser man will fail.

THE PHILOSOPHER. But don't you see that that again is difficult to prove. When two opposing generals are brought face to face, one of them must necessarily be victorious? One military genius out of two professional soldiers! The proportion seems a little high. The case of Pompey comes in appositely here. Until Cæsar appears on the scene, he goes from triumph to triumph. He subdues Italy, Spain, the gladiators, and heaven knows whom besides. Along comes Cæsar and, as the delightful Amyot tells us, "Pompey looked for all the world like a man dazed and dumbfounded." But if

Cæsar had never existed, Pompey would have gone on being Pompey the Great. And so it may be that, during their whole existence, certain people are favoured by Destiny, just as at roulette you may find the red turning up fifteen times running.

THE LIEUTENANT. It is the idea of Destiny itself which strikes me as false and irrational. I live among Mahometans, and their fatalism has cured me of my own. I feel a little shy about airing my philosophical ideas before you; but I owe it to your teaching that I have taken to thinking out things a little. You will let me down lightly. I will confess to you, therefore, that having pondered on these problems in my kasbah, I have come to the conclusion that materialistic determinism, which is Destiny in its modern guise, is not so evident a truth. Doubtless scientific laws are true, and within the limits of a given system, it is possible to foretell what is going to happen; but to apply the principle to the universe as a

whole, to grant that the events of to-morrow are already fixed to-day, is to go very far beyond what our experience tells us. It is indeed to go counter to experience, since the human will, too, is a reality demonstrated by experience. The future is not graven in the present. A perfect intelligence acquainted with all the conditions of a battle—effectives, guns, transport facilities, atmospheric conditions, and so forth, would, nevertheless, be unable to foretell the issue. We must not, therefore, picture to ourselves men of action as advancing through country already mapped out, but rather as leaning over the brink of an obscure abyss in whose depths are just discernible the vague and inchoate forms of the future, rough-hewn shapes which, if it be really their will, they may chisel as they desire. But these clumsy, soldier's metaphysics must strike you as very absurd.

THE PHILOSOPHER. On the contrary, I could give you the names of some profes-

sional metaphysicians who have preceded you along the same road. But every idea rediscovered is a new idea, and I am anxious to hear you go on, for I am preparing a counter-attack which is going to take you in the flank.

THE LIEUTENANT. I'll chance that. This war of ours permits one to take a certain amount of risk. Well, then, I think that the fundamental difference between a great man and one of the common run, is that the great man knows his power, and knows that he can forge the future in his own way. Taking his stand before that dim abyss of which we were speaking just now, he outlines a plan of what the future is going to be. He throws bridges across, he collects his materials; he is the architect of his own life and of other people's.

THE PHILOSOPHER (*under his breath*). Or of their deaths.

THE LIEUTENANT (*after reflecting a moment, says resolutely*). Or of their

deaths. "I always live a couple of years ahead," said Napoleon, and somewhere else he observes, "Men are what we will them to be." The more definite the picture which the leader draws for himself of the future, the greater are its chances of coming true. When a great writer knows exactly what it is he wants to do, his book is written. When a great man of action forms a perfect conception of his objective *and of the means he will employ to attain it,* we may almost say that he has attained it. Our ideas can be turned into facts. Nay more, in a civilized world, almost all realities are ideas solidified. That cart going along there is an idea on wheels. The victory of 1918 existed in the mind of Foch as an idea, before it became a victory *de facto*. Of course the same thing is as true of the political and economic orders as it is of the military order. The world of to-morrow is awaiting the superman who shall possess the power to mould it. If a great man were to form a clear conception

of what post-war Europe ought to be, that Europe, Europe as he conceived it, would come, would indeed have already come, into being. At least it would be so, if the great man possessed character in addition to his other attributes.

THE PHILOSOPHER. There is a good deal in what you say, and I like that picture of the man of action leaning over the verge of Time and visualizing on its shadowy deeps the fabric that his will designs. But with regard to you, I am like the old fencing master: I don't want to hit you, yet I see you off your guard. Do you really think that the mere will to build is sufficient. At the beginning of the war, your white-gloved Saint-Cyriens *willed* with all their might to march on the German machine-guns; but they could not. In 1918, Ludendorff *willed* to penetrate the Champagne front, but the external, concrete world put up such a powerful resistance that Ludendorff had to come to a standstill. If the future is not entirely

determined, neither is it completely void. It may be wrought into some shapes, but not into all. The engineer who constructs a harbour cannot choose whatever plan he pleases. He must allow for the lie of the land, the strength of the tides, and the capital available. All these conditions circumscribe his action with a succession of boundaries which, by their combined encroachments, give him, in the end, a pretty contracted space in which to operate, a space of irregular shape, the narrow defile of the Will that threads the Mountains of Necessity. The captain of the works can choose his time of action, but within the limits of this zone which, if you like, we will call the Territory of Things Possible. The man that is incapable of confining his thoughts within these sacred and invisible limits is, in my opinion, not the man to make a leader. Our 1917 offensive took no account of what was possible and what impossible.

THE LIEUTENANT. That was Lyautey's

view, you know. "Come, *mon petit,*" he said to Colonel Renouard, who brought him the plan from G.H.Q., "come now, this is a plan fit for the army of the Grand Duchess of Gerolstein."

THE PHILOSOPHER. It was a plan without a body, without contact with the solid earth. It all ran on too smoothly, like a second-rate novel. When, on the other hand, a man like Pétain takes over the command, he begins by taking stock of the situation. "We shan't be able to do anything," he said, "until we have the tanks and the Americans here."

THE LIEUTENANT. It is evident that if the Republic of San Marino declared war on Italy, it could not win, however much its leaders might have the will to conquer. That is why I said just now that the more precise the picture which the leader forms of the future, the more likely it is to come to pass. To will is not merely saying that one wills, it is forming a firm idea in one's own

mind of how one is going to act. It is thus that a great general wills. The fighting-forces form an ignorant and unfair idea of the work performed by the general staff. A carefully thought out plan surveys the Territory of Things Possible with all the thoroughness of which the human mind is capable. Read Commandant Laure's book, and you will see there how, in 1918, Pétain wrote on the margin of a plan of attack which seemed rather vague for his liking: *"Sunt verba et voces, prætereaque nihil."* If I must reveal to you my most secret thoughts, the general staffs towards the end of the war erred rather from excess, than from lack, of precision. I don't care about plans of attack regulated like ballets. I think that, in a great many cases, daring triumphs over chance. My experience—

(THE PHILOSOPHER *smiles.*)

THE LIEUTENANT (*continuing, a little on his mettle*). *My experience* is that in every battle, and, generally, in every sort of affair,

there comes an opportunity, sometimes a very fleeting one, of winning the day. You were talking about the push of 1917, but do you remember the attacks in Champagne in 1915? They are usually regarded as a set-back. As a matter of fact my company and a regiment of Zouaves had got through. We were to the left of the hill of Tahure, and our objective was Vouziers. We had taken the first line without opposition. In attacking the second we had been protected by a rise in the ground; we had had luck; still, we had taken it without over much trouble, and we found ourselves in flat, open country. At that time the trenches were not yet very deep. In front of us a few Germans were running for their lives, and guns were being driven off as fast as possible. We killed the horses; we shot down the gunners, and that was all there was to do. The high-road to Vouziers lay open before us. The Zouaves were already well under way, a column four deep. As for me, I did not see the

rest of the regiment, but I had been told "Objective, Vouziers." I fell into step after sending off a dispatch rider to the colonel. We went on like that for about seven miles without firing a shot. Then we began to get anxious. All of a sudden some cuirassiers overtook us at the gallop. "What on earth are you up to," they cried. "You are all on your own. Get back, or you'll be cut off." It appears that the enemy's line had been reformed in our rear.

THE PHILOSOPHER. And how did you come out of it all?

THE LIEUTENANT. The mounted men did finely. They charged, we followed. There was a bit of a smash, but we got through. . . . But this is what I want to get at. If a well-informed staff, alive to every possibility of success, had known of this local penetration, victory was possible. Instead of making a frontal attack on the heights of Tahure, as they did all day to no purpose, they had only to throw their re-

serves into the breach, drive in the right, and Tahure would have been turned.

THE PHILOSOPHER. And the only result would have been to create one pocket the more, for, at that time, victory was not within the Territory of Things Possible.

THE LIEUTENANT. Who can say? That day we were only trying for Tahure. Anyhow, that is only an example, possibly not one of the best. But the psychological moment always comes. At Verdun, for days on end, there was a gap between Mort-Homme and Cumières, which the Germans never happened to take advantage of. Have you read Liman von Sanders' memoirs dealing with his command in the Dardanelles? It is all very interesting. We there read two or three times that if General Hamilton had continued his attack for a quarter of an hour longer, the Turks and the Germans would have thrown up the sponge. "I hadn't a single reserve left," said Liman von Sanders, "and I couldn't fire another gun." My con-

clusion is that General Hamilton may have been the sort of prudent, wise leader you approve of, but that he had the fatal defect of not taking risks. His losses were enormous, and useless. I also conclude that, when acting on the defensive, a soldier should never cease to stick it out. Liman von Sanders had every reason to despair, and yet he was right to hold on. One is never beaten. If there's nothing left to carry on with, there remains the miracle—fever in the enemy's camp, an earthquake, Providence. Joshua made the sun stand still; he was a true soldier.

Take a good example of daring—the capture of Liège by Ludendorff. You remember about it? He advanced during the night, with only one brigade, under the guns of forts that were intact, and presented himself behind those forts at the gates of the city. It was a madly risky thing to do, but it came off. There are cases where the most justifiable caution has made a great general lose

a battle. You were talking of Waterloo. That day, Napoleon made up his mind to leave nothing to chance. He forebore to attack Mont-Saint-Jean in the morning, because the ground was too sodden for the artillery. He was right, but then the delay gave Blucher time to come up, and it robbed the Emperor of victory. You are fond of proverbs. Well then, here's one, "Nothing venture, nothing have."

THE PHILOSOPHER. "Ride gently and you'll travel far." The horses were slipping about frightfully in the ruts of that Ohain road, if I am not mistaken. But as touching this question of daring, there are many things I have to say to you, O Soldier. First of all, it is evident that in war, no less than in business and in politics, risks have to be taken. Given an adversary, the battle follows, the clash of wills, and the doubt as to what the enemy is going to do. The thing is a gamble, that is to say a mode of activity where, though there are lots of things you're

in the dark about, you have to make up your mind how you're going to act. But, secondly, these games are of the bridge type, they're not like roulette. I mean that, though there are certain data you do not know, there are many others which you do. There is still a considerable part to be played by caution, reasoning and science. I am not very comfortable in my mind about that Joshua of yours. On the contrary, it seems to me that to know that you cannot make the sun stand still is part and parcel of a leader's intellectual equipment. Thirdly, the proportion of daring and caution must vary greatly with the circumstances. In certain desperate cases, yes, you must risk everything; just as a surgeon will, as a last resort, attempt to put a stitch in a man's heart. But Pétain in 1917 was right to "ca' canny," because he had the promise of a constant increase of forces. Fourthly, your simile of the man at the edge of the gulf of Time, a simile we have found helpful, is no longer quite appro-

priate. Time, indeed, opens out before us like an unknown abyss, but it is an abyss into which we are descending. Your great man of action, be he general, statesman or captain of industry, is face to face with a picture which is continually unrolling itself, revealing new data every moment. That part of the picture which has been unrolled cannot be ignored. It is characteristic of your great man that he accepts it at once, and mentally assimilates it. He is for ever pushing onward from the advancing frontiers of the new reality. He never wastes his time or his energies in speculating about what might have been. The future is for the hero to carve out, as you rightly showed just now, but the past is out of reach, and the present is his jumping-off ground; he does not find fault with it; he does not grumble at the sappers for not mining deeper; he examines it and incorporates it into his intellectual apparatus. The second-rate mind obstinately clings to his system. But no system is good

for long. Look how things progressed during the war. For example, it was recognized that it was only possible to attack with success after the defences had been destroyed. Hence prolonged artillery preparation. It was then seen that preparation does away with the element of surprise, and that, without surprise, success is only local. Hence a new system of attack: a short preparation with gas shells, to which the immediate reply was: evacuation of the front lines. As soon as a system is worn out, we must have the pluck to scrap it. Leaning over the brink of the gulf of Time, that's just how I, like you, envisage the man of the future; but I see him adapting himself to whatever is necessary and inevitable, being moulded by facts even while he himself is moulding them; conscious of his freedom, yes, but not forgetting his fetters. To revert to Wellington for a moment. When he was asked how he had succeeded in beating the invincible marshals in Spain, he replied: "I'll tell

you; their plans of campaign were like magnificent sets of harness. All very beautiful, very useful even, till they break, and then you're done for. My plans are made of bits of rope; if one of them gives, I tie a knot in it, whip up my horse, and push on again." And when, on the eve of Waterloo, his second-in-command asked him what he intended to do, the Duke said calmly, "Who's going to attack to-morrow, I or Bonaparte?" "Bonaparte," said the other. "Well," continued the Duke, "Bonaparte has given me no idea of his plans, and as my own depend on his, how do you suppose I can tell you what they will be?"

THE LIEUTENANT. With all due respect to Wellington, that attitude of his strikes me as weak. Why should Bonaparte have been the first to attack next day? Why not Wellington himself? I confess I don't quite understand. To be prepared to give up a plan if circumstances render it impossible, to recognize the unsurmountable obstacle when

you come to it, to accept what's over and done with, to put on the brake in time—all that is necessary, excellent, I freely allow. For I am as little of a wild man as you, and you don't suspect it, do you? But there is a great danger in preaching this doctrine, and that is that your weak man will stop at a mole-hill and brag of his caution. In battles, as in everything else, there is never any lack of obstacles. Countless little things will always be going awry—opposition in unexpected quarters, local set-backs, bungling subordinates. The leader must perserve a due sense of proportion and reduce everything to scale. During the battle of Tannenberg, Ludendorff had a telephone message saying that his second corps was in flight. It would have meant the miscarriage of the whole manœuvre. But Ludendorff, without changing an order, without discouraging a subordinate, had the message checked. It turned out to be false. In 1918, no one but Foch would have brought the war to an end

in November. Looking back now, the defeat of the Germans strikes the civilian as a foregone conclusion. It was not so to the fighting men. The personnel was worn out, munitions were exhausted. A week before the Armistice I saw a regiment of artillery so downhearted that, from the colonel down to the newest recruit, not one among them believed they were going to win. "It's all up," they kept saying, "it's one gun against two, now; and no munitions and no transport. When a lorry falls into a ditch, the men let it stop there, because they're too weary to get it out." Heaps of generals begged and prayed that their division, their corps, might be allowed a rest. If Foch had listened to a tithe of the things that were told him at that time, he would have postponed his battle, and the war would have dragged on all through the winter. But he was mad. Thank God for it. As George II said about Wolfe, "If he is mad, I hope he will bite my other generals; they need it."

On the Yser, everybody save him thought the position was hopeless. It was not hopeless, because he continued to hope. A general must be slow to lose heart. Victory may depend on his nerve resistance. War is not a sort of mathematical operation of which you can say, "If the result is negative the battle is lost." It is the conflict of an enormous mass of physical and moral forces of which the sum is continually varying. The Territory of Things Possible is an elastic surface which the leader extends or contracts by his patience or his weakness. The will of the leader is the fixed point. An excess of the critical sense must not be suffered to unsteady the directing fire.

And what is true of warlike activities is no less true of pacific ones. Who caused the bloodiest wars? Was it the bold, energetic, strong-willed men? Not at all. It has usually been the gentle, kindly statesman whose very gentleness gives his bolder neighbour the impression that he may venture on

anything. During the last hundred years, England has had two nationalist ministers, Palmerston and Disraeli. Were they responsible for great wars? No. Palmerston, left to himself, scared Europe without ever disturbing its peace. But the excellent Lord Aberdeen, full, as he was, of affection for the Russians, finished by declaring that ridiculous Crimean War (for ridiculous it was) against them; and, by his hesitation, the mild and sagacious Sir Edward Grey rendered possible the war of 1914. Have you ever watched the motors at a difficult crossing? The chauffeur with a will of his own, who knows his route and sticks to it, gets through; the others, being cautious, get out of his way, and in such circumstances it is vastly more dangerous to hesitate than to go ahead.

THE PHILOSOPHER. Perhaps. Nevertheless, it's no use going on and breaking your neck out of mere arrogance, should you meet a second chauffeur equally as strong-willed

as yourself. Your theory of war being let loose by the pacifist strikes me as being more paradoxical than sound. As for Grey's attitude in 1914, I might perhaps find something to say in reply. Napoleon and Bismarck, of course, were soft-hearted dreamers. One would think, to hear you talk, that bullying was always successful; Sazonof and Berchtold proved the contrary. A great swordsman before a bout does not merely say, "I intend to win." He is careful to find out his adversary's methods. If he can, he goes and sees him in action. If he knows nothing of the adversary opposed to him, he scans him narrowly and, before engaging, endeavours to take his measure. Do you not desiderate the same precautions in a general or a statesman? Is not a knowledge of the character, the habits, the doctrines of the adversary a *sine qua non*? One ought always to be askink oneself, "This man being what he is, how will he act?" A constant meditation on the workings of his opponent's mind will make

him so closely acquainted with him that he will be able to tell in advance what he will do. I should be in favour of giving the investigation of the enemy mind an almost theatrical setting. Officers might be chosen from the general staff to represent the enemy. In peace time there should be a secretary at the Quai d'Orsay whose mission it should be to play the part of "the man in the street," as the English call him. Another should play the German, another the Italian. The effect of the various notes should be tried on them before they were dispatched to their destination.

THE LIEUTENANT. The army, my dear master, have anticipated your wishes in this respect. When Von Hutier, the conqueror of Riga, arrived on the Saint-Quentin front, General Pétain had a memorandum drawn up describing the methods of this fresh adversary and circulated it among the troops that were opposed to the new-comer. In 1918, in the Inter-Allied War Council, there

was "a German section" who knew nothing of the Allied plans, and whose business it was to think like the enemy. At the head of it was put an Englishman belonging to the old Saxon nobility, it being hoped that this ancestral strain in him would make him reason like Ludendorff. I was told that the plans which he drew up differed little from the plans which the Germans actually adopted.

THE PHILOSOPHER. Well, that was distinctly one up to the soldiers.

THE LIEUTENANTT (*slowly, for he ponders while speaking, and accepts certain ideas with reluctance*). It's all a matter of proportion. If I carefully analyse the method of the perfect chauffeur, I find that his course is swift and straight, but also that his body, continually on the alert, is, at it were, part and parcel of the machine, and is ready at any moment to stop or to swerve aside. He is at once strong and flexible, like a finely tempered blade. A great character is perhaps an extraordinary blend of assurance

and modesty, a miraculous example of equilibrium between opposing forces. There must be strength of will; there must be moderation. No doubt such a blend seems hardly possible, but it does in fact exist in the composition of the great soldier. It is because it exists in him that he becomes a great soldier, and it is because the blend is rare that great men are so seldom met with. "When you are talking about me," says Lyautey, "never say 'or,' say 'and.' Don't say, 'Is he strong *or* is he weak,' say, 'He is strong *and* he is weak.'" . . . There are many inteligent men, many daring men, many cautious men, but there are few complete men. Read the life of Turenne. He was at once the boldest and the most modest of men. "He seemed," his biographer tells us, "like one who had become a stranger to himself, so impartial was he in regard to his own ideas."

THE PHILOSOPHER (*repeating these last words with great satisfaction*). "Impartial

in regard to his own ideas." An excellent phrase!

THE LIEUTENANT. The Emperor, for all his boldness in the field, always tried to make sure of the trumps; he estimated his adversary's forces, and if he sometimes belittled them for the benefit of his own men, so as not to alarm them unduly, he never deceived himself, as inferior leaders always do. Only, when he had bestowed all the resources of his mind on the careful preparation of a campaign, he refused to regard success as doubtful, and drove straight ahead. As for Foch, whose ardour I have described to you, his war teaching is of the most prudent description. He was asked one day to give a lecture on strategy to some officers. He concluded, in his characteristic manner, with a phrase of Pascalian brevity: "Messieurs . . . le perroquet . . . animal sublime."— "Gentlemen . . . the parrot . . . a sublime creature." And in point of fact the procedure of the parrot, in his esti-

mation, gives the best idea of what a leader should be in battle. Hanging on with both claws to the bottom bar of his cage, he feels with his beak for the bar above. As soon as he finds it, he catches hold of it, and then boldly brings up one of his claws to a level with his beak. But he holds on firmly with the other claw until he is quite sure of his new position. Then, and not till then, does he bring up the second claw. That done, he pushes his beak up to the next bar. "The parrot is a sublime creature."

THE PHILOSOPHER. A sublime creature, true enough; but you must pardon my frankness, O Soldier, if I observe that this tenacious and prudent bird strikes me as more truly typical of the peasant or trader's shrewd common-sense than of the soldier's attitude of mind. Military power, absolute and domineering, seems hardly calculated to develop the qualities which I have been delighted to hear you belaud; namely, modesty, restrained judgment, freedom of ideas. The

soldier is, almost of necessity, obsequious in the lower ranks, tyrannical in the higher ones. If, by reason of your individual qualities, you and a few others are exceptions to this rule, that must not blind us to its general truth. A friend of mine tells a good story of a much-bewildered captain. "They keep sending me contrary instructions," he said, "and they are majors, both of them; which is right?" "You must find out which is the senior," answered my friend. The advice was considered very sound. That was the solution. The habit of being obeyed merely on the strength of his rank is bound to foster in a man a contempt for the facts. Xerxes ordered the sea to be whipped. Many a strategist must have longed to have the storm confined to barracks. And when the facts have to do with humanity, with flesh and blood; when it's a case of excessive casualties, of squandering man-power, then, it's the facts that get the worst of it.

THE LIEUTENANT. Don't imagine that

your story makes me feel abashed. Yes, the senior is in the right. You must have a rule in order to act promptly. The rule in question is simple, and therefore excellent, just as it is right and natural that the King's eldest son should succeed to the throne. I quite see the danger you indicate; it is a real one, but only for inferior natures, military or civilian. I hate the be-ribboned bureaucrat as much as you do, the baleful, gold-braided old fossil for whom death is merely one of the columns in a numerical statement. If such men have been, they are abnormal. They are to be found in your ranks, as well as in ours. But to judge all great soldiers by their measure would be somewhat as if, having come across some scribbler devoid of talent and character, you were to affirm that all great novelists are jealous, mean-spirited and thin-skinned. In peace time baseness can thrive in the Army as elsewhere. Unless he is lucky enough to get sent to the Colonies, your soldier becomes a civilian,

a politician, a sycophant, anything you like. In such circumstances the man of character stands aside in disgust, and bides his time. Our worst generals, in the early days of the war, were civilian generals, chosen by civilians, and trained by civilians. In 1870 it was the politicians who insisted on imposing Bazaine upon us. But war is the thing to bring out character. The courtier, the Court favourite, is sent packing. The man who forges ahead then is neither a flatterer nor a tyrant. During the manœuvres, some time prior to 1914, Colonel Pétain was in command of the Blue Army, and was victorious. The commander-in-chief called a meeting of officers for the purpose of criticism, and asked the unsuccessful leader to state what his plans had been. When he had finished, the general said to him, "Well, my friend, your case is clear; you were beaten because you started the day with a preconceived idea," and he went on to explain at length why one ought to come on to the

field with an open mind. Then, turning to Pétain, he said with a smile, "Now, Pétain, what about you, what was your scheme?" "Sir," began Pétain, "I had a preconceived idea that—"

THE PHILOSOPHER (*delightedly*). I like that Pétain of yours.

THE LIEUTENANT. I knew you would. . . . At heart, my very dear master, you are a born soldier.

THE PHILOSOPHER. I am a Frenchman, my friend, and a peasant. My ancestors, like yours, were the fellows for a fight. I love to march along with the drums and the bugles; the sight of your big, fiery generals delights the portrait-lover in me. However, I strive my utmost to keep my mind free, and those men in their brilliant trappings, with their bands of gold braid on their arms, insignia that serve them instead of arguments, fill me with great anxiety. I hate war much more because it makes me their slave than because of its dangers. I have

made me an apothegm thereupon: "If a man is not an anti-militarist at forty, it's because he has never been in the army."

THE LIEUTENANT. Pardon my frankness, O Civilian, but you give yourself a false idea of military obedience. Passive obedience is never the abasement of one man before another. It is the voluntary effacement of an individual before a function. When I stand at attention before my colonel (and I do it with a keen pleasure, I assure you) it is not to a man that I click my heels. It is to a principle of authority which I regard as salutary and worthy of respect, and without which human society, the guardian of your precious liberty, would never have existed at all. Besides, excepting just those moments when, giving me his orders, he becomes but a function, I discuss matters with my colonel, aye, and with considerable heat! He puts up with it, nay, he encourages it, and again I say, that is what makes him a good officer. He is the sum of contraries.

Imperious in action, unbiassed in council. It must be so. No leader could carry out unaided the tremendous task involved in commanding an army. He must make himself felt through his subordinates. He must know how to discover them—winning them over, inclining his ear to what they have to say. Have you read in *Pesquidou* how the old boar, when he is approaching his end, picks out a youngster, takes him to his lair, and teaches him the secret of the woods. Then you see, among the ravaged crops, two tracks running always side by side, one well-defined, and the other fainter. Thus the old chief sniffs out the scion of the blood-royal and attaches him to his person. When Gallieni, a colonel of long experience, saw Lyautey, as a young major, landing in Indo-China, he instantly divined in that smart, too smart, young cavalier the fire and resolution of the born commander. With gruff solicitude, nay, with harshness, ferocity even, he made up his mind to teach the youngster the

laws of the jungle, and to rub his nose in the mother earth of reality. Joffre carried about with him in the pocket of his cloak a little notebook filled with memoranda. Therein you might have read long lists of unknown names, names of obscure colonels, of captains hardly anyone had heard of, already marked down for promotion.

A Napoleon, a Lyautey, a Gallieni, a Pétain are not obeyed out of fear. Napoleon was not stern; he was not as stern as he ought to have been. Had he been any other man he would have cashiered Bernadotte after Auerstædt. We were talking just now of Turenne. His army was a model of the perfect republic. Neither command nor obedience obtruded itself on the notice. "Everyone knew his duty, and did it, out of anxiety to please the general, and from a sincere desire for glory, which marked them all, from the commander down to the humblest private." And so it was in Morocco. Everyone performed his duties to the very letter,

out of affection for the Marshal. When it became known that he was to inspect the works in progress at some port, or on some road or other, they hastened to get them finished, for the satisfaction of seeing the pleased look on his face. An officer, buried alive in some remote outpost in the Atlas region, thinks of the chief, and is conscious of an accession of fresh energy. Round about the real leader you will always find the henchmen, the group of loyal and efficient specialists, to whom he gives full liberty of action, because he knows that in all circumstances they will do all that it is humanly possible to do. Such was Davout in the case of Napoleon, and Berthier, also, in another sphere. Murat, too, the dashing cavalry leader, always strikes me, within the limits of his own special powers, as resembling those minor experts, indispensable coadjutors of some great surgeon who cannot himself handle the radium or the ether. There is, among men, the type "leader," which has

need, for its due development, of a big place in the sun. There is also the type "subordinate," which can only blossom in the shade. Just as fine, in its way, just as useful, but as different from the former as the periwinkle from the lime-tree.

These two races of men are completentary one to the other. Each of them lacks certain qualities which the other alone can give him. Men like Lyautey know nothing of details. When, during manœuvres, a member of the Government inquires how many shells he has per gun, he answers: "I don't know at all; I have my artillerymen." Ask him what he is himself, and he will answer, "I—I am the technician of general ideas." And that is how it should be. The technician of details, cut off from his chief, is a lost man. When Napoleon was commanding his armies, all his generals behaved like great captains. When he went away, they spent their time squabbling among themselves and getting beaten. In the Council of State there were

men in each department who had a much deeper knowledge of the questions at issue than the Emperor, but, if he were not there, the discussions would go on aimlessly, and nothing would come of them. Louis XIV was a discoverer and inspirer of great men. I like reading in Saint-Simon how, when at Rochefort, he ran across the little fellow Renaud, who was captain of a frigate, and how he created a school and appointed him head of it; a school through which every sailor in the kingdom had to pass. But what would a man like Renaud have been without the King?

I have a friend who, two years ago, left the army and went into trade, and who has been telling me his impressions. He, too, has observed that the indispensable man, the man who takes the lead in business, is not the expert, at all events not the expert as such; it is the organizer, the man endowed with character, judgment, impartiality. For you understand, don't you, that I am not

such a simpleton as to suppose that only the soldier can possess that equilibrium of opposing virtues which we consider so valuable; I speak of him because it is he I know best, but I imagine the great statesman, the great surgeon, the great captain of industry are in need of the same equilibrium of forces, and, if they are really great, possess it. Perfection in preparation, boldness in execution, respect for reality, and impartiality in regard to one's own ideas, surely all these things are found in different degrees in a Louvois, a Lincoln, a Renault, a Vanderbilt. (*He hesitates a moment.*) I've got a little notebook at home which I would show you if I were not afraid you would think me a trifle ridiculous. In it I jot down, as I happen to notice them or read of them, the maxims of great men of action, as the young and ignorant artist copies the old Masters. (*He notices that* THE PHILOSOPHER *is looking at him closely.*) You don't like what I am saying?

THE PHILOSOPHER. Why shouldn't I? If Plutarch's portraits are bigger than life-size, so much the better. It is by imagining heroes that we end by creating them. Have you got, among your military classics, Tolstoi's *Sebastopol*? Do you remember the passage where Kalougin, making his way towards the Fourth Bastion, with bombs and shells bursting all round him, experiences a feeling of terror. All at once he thinks of that aide-de-camp of Napoleon's who, when asked by the Emperor if he was hurt, answered, "Pardon, Sire, I am dead." Tolstoi says something to the effect that Kalougin thought that very fine, and even imagined that he was that aide-de-camp. He spurred on his horse, and put on a braver Cossack air.

THE LIEUTENANT (*repeating the words enthusiastically*). "A braver Cossack air"—yes, that is great. And it reminds me of a scene I witnessed during the war. I had been embarked as a passenger on board the *Gaulois*. In the officers' mess the talk was

running on the possibilities of our being torpedoed. A naval lieutenant, M. de B—, a highly cultivated and somewhat supercilious young man, described to me how the crew of the *Bouvet* went down singing, every man at his post. That same night I was awakened by a fearful shock. We had been torpedoed. Along alley-ways, already awash, up dark and difficult stairs, I groped my way, and there, on the bridge, I found the commander and his staff. The boat had a heavy list. Forward, a turret kept firing, for the look of the thing, no doubt, for there was nothing to be seen. The officers were continuing the conversation of the previous evening. M. de B—, in silk pyjamas and patent shoes, was explaining in affected tones how it behooved us to go down. Lying low in my corner, I waited and listened. "What strikes me as odd," I was saying to myself, "is that the whole thing doesn't seem real. This B— is acting a part, and the captain, who refuses to leave his ship, refuses really because he

wishes to go on acting his part of captain." Afterwards, on board the torpedo-boat that had rescued me, I couldn't help coming back to the same idea. Only, then I thought, "A part, yes, but if the part is sustained to the death, it becomes a part of the man himself." Do you not agree with that?

THE PHILOSOPHER (*smiling, stands up*). I have a great respect for *dramatis personæ.* Tell me, what are you doing to-morrow? My lecture is over at ten. If at five minutes past you will be at the entrance to the Luxembourg (the one in the Boulevard Saint-Michel, between Stendhal and the Velléda) we can go for a stroll together. Bring your notebook with you.

THE LIEUTENANT (*a little embarrassed*). Yes, but . . . well, you will find some notes in it about yourself.

THE PHILOSOPHER. What—a common soldier among the brass-hats?

THE LIEUTENANT (*opening the door*). There are some philosophers there.

DIALOGUE THE SECOND

I think that genius depends largely on our passions.

—VAUVENARGUES.

THE PHILOSOPHER. That's what I call punctuality.

THE LIEUTENANT. Orders must be obeyed.

THE PHILOSOPHER (*taking him by the arm and leading him to the column in which Stendhal's portrait-medallion is inset*). Let us sit down here for a minute or two. This big plane tree will give us shade, and, in front of us, that hussar there, who was also a good psychologist, will be a deity propitious to our discussions.

THE LIEUTENANT (*a little ruffled*). That hussar was an Army Service officer, and because he had seen nothing at Waterloo he insisted that there had been nothing to see there. (*He approaches the column and examines the portrait.*) I'll be hanged if a hussar ever . . .

THE PHILOSOPHER (*laughing*). So much the worse for the hussars. You are a terrible man!

THE LIEUTENANT. Anyhow, did he do any fighting?

THE PHILOSOPHER. Ah! Very little, I agree, but he regretted it. Beneath that dashing manner of his, which I love so much, I can detect, in every word he utters, the wounded *amour-propre* of the non-combatant officer. To that melancholy of the half-fledged warrior we owe Fabrice del Dongo, Julien Sorel and Lucien Leuwen. For them we would willingly forgive our author his lack of fighting experience. . . . But let us talk about you, the genuine fighting man. What have you been doing with yourself since yesterday? Have you thought about our subject?

THE LIEUTENANT. As little as possible. Whenever I prepare a reply, I am so preoccupied with the speech I have to make that I don't listen to my interlocutor, and my

eagerness makes me nervous. But pitch me into the water, and I can swim all right.

THE PHILOSOPHER. Last night I could not sleep for thinking of the things we had been discussing. "The youngster still has his head screwed on the right way," I said to myself, "in spite of his gold braid and the Desert, but how disquieting are some of the things he said. The sort of thing for which the pre-war general staffs were so justly criticized, that contempt for the understanding, the importance assigned to instinct and enthusiasm in the carrying out of big undertakings, the idea that a mystical resolve to conquer can take the place of plan and method—he has got all those notions back again in spite of the hard lessons he had to learn. Even when he is trying his best to be moderate and to keep his ideas within bounds, the doctrine of 'do or die' forces its way through, breaks out into passionate formulas and shows how profoundly he believes in it."

I thought I had inoculated you against all that when we were reading and commenting on the *Discours de la Méthode* together at Saint-Louis. We agreed that the Army and the Understanding had always got on well together in France. It was when he was on active service during the German wars that Descartes first built up his system. The great Condé was an ardent logician, and when he was passing through Holland he tried hard to see Spinoza. Hoche used to read Montaigne and Rabelais . . . .

THE LIEUTENANT. I read them myself sometimes; and really I don't quite see what you are girding at me about. Speaking quite seriously, I can conscientiously say that I don't in the least despise the understanding. My fellow-officers hold the same views about the matter as I do. When my colonel, who is a remarkable man in his way, gave us a tactical problem to work out on the map and saw an officer in difficulties, he would say ironically, "Well, sir, what more are you

waiting for in order to bring the moral forces into play?" And one day, when I was showing him a draft thesis intended to indicate what fire could do, forgetting to entrench my men, he said, "Well, and what are you going to do now, play *The Marseillaise*?"

But wait; I've got an account in this notebook here of an interesting debate which took place in the Chamber in 1832, when General Bugeaud had to defend the military view against the Radicals of his day. They it was who then maintained that it was ardent faith in the Revolution that had given strength to the armies of '93. (*He begins turning over the leaves of a black notebook.*)

"Nothing is further from the truth," said Bugeaud. "What gave the armies of the Revolution their strength was, first and foremost, the fact that they had nothing in front of them. Men who had been on active service at the time have often assured me that there were not more than a hundred and fifty thousand men in line against us."

A Member. It is a slur on the nation to say a thing like that.

General Bugeaud. It was only natural that, if you put up a million men, you would get a powerful army out of them. But in spite of all that, the earlier campaigns were not conspicuously successful in these minor actions. Sometimes we won, more often we lost. (*Loud cries of dissent from the Left.*) Let the facts speak for themselves, gentlemen; it is necessary that the facts should be given you, at least for the country's sake, for there are many people in France here who are convinced that they have only got to sing *The Marseillaise* in order to rout all the armies in Europe. (*Laughter from the Centre, cries of dissent from the Left.*) It is necessary to learn, gentlemen, that so long as our armies were not properly organized, so long as tactics were non-existent, you had no pronounced successes, and you had reverses.

M. Taschereau. In 1830 the people of Paris proved that they could overcome an army.

M. Odilon-Barrot. Enthusiasm and exaltation are a force in themselves.

General Bugeaud. I greatly approve of *The Marseillaise* as a patriotic song, but I do think you want something besides that to win a battle.

You see that on that occasion it was a soldier who was the defender of military science, and the Radicals who formed the "do or die" school.

THE PHILOSOPHER. And you agree with Bugeaud?

THE LIEUTENANT. Let me see. Do I agree with Bugeaud? I certainly think that, by itself, *The Marseillaise* will not bring victory. I think that in every action there must be a certain amount of *The Marseillaise* spirit and a certain amount of intelligence. Or, to speak more precisely, I think that in life there are problems which may be solved by reasoning and others in which reason is of small avail. But I am obscure and awkward when I have to express myself in abstract terms; let me take an example.

THE PHILOSOPHER. Pray do.

THE LIEUTENANT. When war was declared in 1914, Lyautey received orders from the Government to prepare to send back the majority of the troops in Morocco. It was realized that, with the small number of troops Lyautey would have left, it would be impossible for him to hold the country. They therefore merely asked him to retain

Fez and to arrange for the evacuation of the French troops in the South. If with a hundred thousand men you can occupy a given territory, with twenty thousand you can occupy a fifth of it. Mere rule of three, that!

Such orders meant, and he knew it, that all his work would be undone. He never said a word, but just shut himself up in his room for twenty-four hours. When he emerged, he dictated, straight off the reel, a plan which is still celebrated out there, and is known as the plan of the 20th August. "I will send you back," he said, "all the battalions you ask me for, only retaining just enough to make a show. Our policy will be to keep on smiling. Not only are we not going to be anxious; in the eyes of the natives, we shall be positively light-hearted. We will have an Exhibition at Rabat, a Fair at Fez. A man that has a job to stick at, doesn't trouble his head about fighting. Every workshop opened means a battle

won." This programme was put into execution; not only was the conquered ground retained, but tribes that were still disaffected actually came in and submitted, because they wanted to ride on the roundabouts at Fez. Arithmetic was clean out of it that time.

What made Lyautey act as he did? Was it logic? Was it a series of deductions? He had his arguments, no doubt, but they were no better and no worse than those of the War Office. No, it was much rather an intimate and profound knowledge of the country, of the Arabs and the Berbers, a sort of "soul and body divination"; an intuition. And yet I see nothing here that suggests the clairvoyant or the medium, but just a mode of thought which is yours and mine when it comes to foretelling what one of our friends, say, or our mistress, is going to do. "You don't prove that you ought to be loved by expounding the reasons of love. That would be absurd." When you're playing

rugger you don't start proving that it's possible to score a try. You just score it. You don't prove that it is possible to win a battle. You win it. The rule of three, true enough in regard to things, ceases to hold good where human beings are concerned. There are cases in which the "discursive" intelligence, to use your "shop" term, does its work and sets things going. On the other hand, there are cases in which the intelligence works *in vacuo,* without getting a grip on reality.

THE PHILOSOPHER. How do you distinguish between the two categories?

THE LIEUTENANT (*thoughtfully*). It isn't easy. . . . Let us clear the ground a little, let us put, on the one side, the definite, ponderable things, things you can take as the elements of a science, or use like terms in a logical argument, such as lorries, guns, effectives, probable deviations, and, on the other side, the imponderable things, courage, enthusiasm, activity, fear, things for which

words can only indicate an emotional zone of subtle and changing outline.

There are the shells, which can be counted, but there is grit, the power to stand up to them without flinching, and that cannot be expressed in figures. You know what two numbers added together will give, but not two temperaments. The great danger lies in using the scales of logic to weigh words of indefinite connotation. People who do so, give themselves the illusion of having demonstrated truths as immutable as the truths of mathematics, and that makes fanatics of them. The sophists of Greece, the idealists of the eighteenth century, treated words as if they were real beings. When your Rousseau says, "Man was born free and everywhere he is in fetters," he might just as well write, "Man was born rich and everywhere he is in want; man was born capable of jumping eighteen metres, and now he only jumps seven metres sixty." You can't give a statement the force of a self-

evident truth merely by calling it an axiom. The doctrinaires of the beginning of the war, the men of whom you fall foul, and perhaps rightly, had no lack of logic. Quite the reverse. Their doctrine of the offensive was based on very skilful deductions, and, furthermore, it was reason that made them abstain from reasoning. They proved by $A+B$ that their system would bring victory. But you can prove anything when your wheels are running free, because, then, you have no weight to draw. Wasn't it M. Bergson who said, "You could prove that it is impossible to learn to swim, for, in order to swim, you must keep yourself above water, and to keep yourself above water, you must know how to swim." There would be no barristers if there were not two sides to every question. Take some very trifling controversy. How each disputant proves that all the right is on his side! But a way out has to be found, so they shake hands and square the matter. The Berbers have a

proverb which says: "Make up your mind and you'll win." But suppose you've nothing to guide you? It doesn't matter; make up your mind, or you'll certainly be done for. That is why I say action must have another motive force than pure reason. Am I wrong? I only want to get at the truth.

THE PHILOSOPHER. Just a minute. If, in some cases, reason appears to allow certain erroneous propositions to get through, that is no argument against reason *qua* reason, but against the mistaken employment of it. M. Bergson himself has clearly shown how Zeno of Elea hoodwinked his disciples. If a knife doesn't cut, you don't conclude that no knife will cut, but simply that the knife in question has not been properly sharpened. Logic is a well-constructed apparatus. If you set it going by putting a bad penny in the slot, that does not prove that the machine is bad, it proves that you are a swindler. Moreover, means can almost always be found to prevent fraud. The rival

counsel plead their cause; the judge distinguishes what is sound from what is sophistical in their reasoning. Your argument about swimming is easily shown to be fallacious. To say that to keep above water one must first of all know how to swim, is to forget all about ropes, swimming instructors and water-wings.

But, above all, if it is dangerous to reason about indeterminate elements, it is far more dangerous to refuse to reason concerning elements that are quite clearly defined. To charge against a nest of machine guns when all the calculations go to show that not a single man can get up to them alive, to try to engage enemy aeroplanes with a machine that is inferior in climbing power, to bring a sort of sentimental intuition and mystical divination to bear on concrete matters of fact, is simple madness. In other words, even where action is concerned, science has its sphere, an extensive sphere, which calls for the methods of the scientist, not those of

the thaumaturge. (THE LIEUTENANT *shakes his head.*) You are not convinced?

THE LIEUTENANT. I am just seeing if your penny's a good one. There is, you say, in things of action, plenty of scope for science. Clearly this is so. The manufacture of explosives, discovering an effective gas mask, increasing the speed of aeroplanes—these are matters which call for a knowledge of ballistics, of chemistry and of aerodynamics. Note, however, that in action, science is never completely exact; chemistry is not, nor physics, nor strategy, any more than arithmetic, which, as we saw just now, may lead us quite astray. Science treats of the relations between theoretic objects presenting pure properties. Such objects do not exist. Science is right enough for Euclid's straight lines, or for General Cartier de Chalmot's paste-board soldiers. At manœuvres, it is true we have cut-and-dried plans and intentions chemically pure, but the properties of real objects are mysterious and

individual. Take an analytical chemist and dump him down in some industrial concern, without interposing between him and the diabolical deceptiveness of material things, a good sound foreman, and he will make you apparatuses that jib and retorts that won't work. The story of the apprentice magician is founded on fact. Put any of the principles of scientific strategy to the practical test; this one for example: "If you find yourself in the presence of two groups of hostile forces, you must engage the bigger one." In his campaign in Italy, Napoleon, regardless of Carnot, attacked the smaller of two armies, duly accounted for it, returned to attack the other, and so destroyed them both, in defiance of all rules. In 1914, Von Kluck, an excellent strategist, applied the text-book rules, and, as a reward for his fidelity to traditional military science, got the worst of the deal. The Austrian generals, all through the war, combined admirable military science with a prodigious aptitude for getting beaten.

The reason is that, in reality, fighting is much more an art than a science. Your rules must be elastic. You tell your infantry man, for example, that he "mustn't hang on to the tank to avoid the shells, because the enemy will make a target of it." And then you say, "You must learn to jump in behind the tank, so as to take advantage of the cover which it has just burrowed out." How is a man to reconcile these two conflicting orders? In the same way as the fiction writer who has learnt the secret of being true without being photographic; by apportioning the dose, by using his tact, his taste; as a good dancer guides whilst being guided. The line is not rigid; principles must have some give and take about them. Science deals with generalities; you can only predicate truth of the particular.

Further, even in pure science, the savant is not beyond the reach of false weights, of fallacious arguments. One of my fellow officers was at the Polytechnic when the brothers Wright made their first flight. His

professor of mechanics made the event the subject of a lecture. "Theory," he said, "enabled us to foresee that only the biplane, that is to say two carrying surfaces with a balancer in front, would be capable of flying." He proved it brilliantly. Six months later Blériot was flying with a monoplane. Then came another lecture, in which the calculations of the same professor proved to the satisfaction of two hundred young mathematicians that what had been, could be.

In 1915, there was a sergeant in my company who had just been through his Science course at the Normale. His pet notion was that the German front was unbreakable. He calculated the effects of the first infantry fire barrage, then the losses caused by the field guns, and finally by the heavy artillery, after which not a single assailant would be left alive. "We shall never get through," he wound up, "it's a mathematical certainty." I tried to dispute his conclusions. The other hearers sided with him. "Why argue the

point," they said, "since it's a matter of mathematics?" "I argue," I answered, "just *because* it's a matter of mathematics."

THE PHILOSOPHER. To have a plentiful supply of good sense, one must be so constituted that the reason triumphs over the feelings and experience over the reason. It is certain that reason, a piece of airily perfect mechanism, proceeds on its flight by beating its wings in the fluid which sustains it, to wit, the external world. "The lightsome dove," says Kant, "may believe that it would fly still swifter in the void." That, too, is what the idealists think, who are pretty handy subjects for your mockery. But the true scientist never forgets the external world. He classifies facts, he deduces laws from them, though he himself regards those laws merely as hypotheses, and then he proceeds to compare them with reality, which, in the last resort, is the ultimate tribunal. In scientific research, if it be properly conducted, the reasoning faculty and the

observation of facts co-operate like the tank and the infantryman you were just now describing. Reason leads the way; she illumines the onward path; if she sees the learner entangled in some brushwood she herself has passed over unnoticed in her course, she turns back and goes to his assistance. That is still the only means that has been discovered to carry the position, to arrive at the Truth.

THE LIEUTENANT (*with hesitation*). Certainly I think that method an excellent one in research, in the study, in preparing for action. But when it comes to action itself, well, that is a very different matter. In action you do not seek the absolute, you try to find out what is best for you to do at a given point of time. An approximate, a working, solution, arrived at then and there, is a thousand times better than a perfect solution produced in a week's time. There is a momentary space when the organism of a sick man hovers between life and death.

There is no time, at such a crisis, for analysis and research. In matters of finance there comes, maybe, an opportunity when a bold decision may reverse the consequences of a seemingly unprofitable investment. That is not the time to open an international commission for a full-dress investigation of the currency question. On the 13th Vendémiaire it was by a minute that Napoleon saved the Convention; on the Marne it was by a single day that Joffre saved his army. In that sense there is no harm in a general staff's being Bergsonian if, that is to say, by being a Bergsonian you mean realizing the value of time. Your man of Science cannot affirm or decide anything until he possesses as perfect a mechanical model as possible of the phenomena he is studying. He cares little about the time it takes to construct such a model. If I remember rightly, Darwin was collecting data for five years before he ventured on a single generalization. Then, when he had prepared a preliminary sketch

of his theory, he waited another nineteen years before giving it to the world. Newton meditated for eighteen long years on the laws of gravitation. Admirable, if you like, but devilish long for a time-harassed man who has to make up his mind where to place his quick-firing sections. If they had examined the problem of attacking a continuous front by really scientific methods, we should have found ourselves at the beginning of another Hundred Years' War. As a matter of fact, that is not how your big business men decide how they are going to act.

THE PHILOSOPHER. And how do they decide?

THE LIEUTENANT. I have not observed them at anything like close range, but I have tried to grasp their methods by analogy. Once upon a time I often used to take part in horse races, a good example of complete action because the horse is a living creature. Well, now, before the race, you can, nay you

ought, to give full play to your reason. You can train your horse intelligently, and decide on the best race for which to enter him. But once the flag is dropped, you've no more time to think. Then, prompt decision is the one thing needful. You've got to take advantage of an opening, to divine intuitively the right moment for calling on your horse to do his utmost, to look out for signs of flagging in your opponent; but you don't put all that to yourself in so many words and phrases; you *feel* that the opportunity is favourable. A sort of corporal communication is established between the rider and his mount. A sensitiveness, intensified by the nervous tension of the contest, enables the rider to divine from moment to moment the precise "form" of his horse, just as it enables the horse to respond to the slightest wish of the rider.

Do you suppose that a good footballer, when he gets hold of the ball, says to himself, "The bulk of the opposing team is on my

right, I am too well marked to be able to dribble myself, I will therefore pass to my neighbour on the left wing." He wouldn't have time to articulate so much as half that sentence. But the lie of the land, the position of the players, all this he takes in at a glance, and that glance switches on the necessary action.

In a boar hunt, the real sportsman takes the lead into his own hands. "Two men here," he says; "two more there; the beaters and I will go this way," and he divines with accuracy the track the animal is sure to follow.

So, on the battle-field, the look of the ground, the manner in which some of the enemy troops are advancing to the attack, tell the born soldier quite plainly the sort of manœuvre that is afoot. The position of the enemy, the sounds, the lie of the land enable him to see at once where the quick-firers are, where the general staff, and where the reserves. In a flash he takes in how the

attack is going to develop, and what measures he should adopt to counter it.

So, too, when you're in an aeroplane. You may feel that it is not the right moment to rise, that you must wait for another current. It would puzzle you to say why. Indeed, it really seems that at such moments you think with your body, and not with your mind. That sort of impression is natural in the case of riding, or flying, things which have to do with the body, but there is no doubt that great leaders of men go to work in the same way. When I am told that Foch thinks with his muscles and traces his plan of action in the air with his clenched fists, I am by no means taken aback. It merely proves to me that the Marshal and his thinking faculty are one corporate whole. This coalescence of mind with matter (which is the safest guide in action) is naturally accompanied by gesture. The union is so immediate, so rich in detail, that it cannot be expressed in words. It is a vast and, as

it were, living whole, difficult to transmit, and recognizable only by the decisions which flash from it, like the gleams from a storm-cloud. It takes on the form of a picture, as in the mind of a great poet.

In May, 1918, when Commandant Laure brought the orders of the Commander-in-Chief to General Fayolle, orders which were to push on with all speed beyond the Avre, a look of displeasure passed over Fayolle's countenance. Suddenly he rose. "All the same," he exclaimed, "if I want to get to the other end of this room, full of obstacles as it is, shall I give out that I can only do so by jumping over everything that tends to hinder or obstruct me? Of course not; I should fall long before I reached the door." So saying, he passed round the biggest pieces of furniture, stepped over, or pushed aside, the others, and advancing with measured steps, he reached the door and made it give by pressing against it with both hands. "That is my mode of attack," he said.

Does this need for dumb-show astonish or shock you? For my part, I regard it as the mark of a well-constructed mind. An intelligence isolated from the body, which ought to be the projection from it, is merely the dove in the void of which you were talking just now. It is the body which is the ballast, and which keeps it from rising into too rarefied an atmosphere. The direct action of a physical presence on the mind cannot be denied. Any man of business will tell you the difference between a personal visit and a letter. A letter could communicate all the intellectual content of a thought, but it suffers the corporal part, which an inflexion of the voice would have revealed, to evaporate. There is, in the history of the Battle of the Marne, a notable dramatic incident which must certainly be staged one of these days. It exemplifies the influence of Joffre's material personality, I mean the influence of the man Joffre, of that massive body of the man, headstrong, yet charged with emotion and a

frenzied desire to conquer. Do you know about his visit to French when French had lost confidence in us and said he would fight no more? There were the English generals, drawn up to their full height behind a table, motionless, sceptical, sick of promises that were never kept; confronting them, Joffre, passionately eager, stammering with emotion, with monotonous gesture laying, so to speak, his heart on the table that separated them. Do you suppose that what won French over was what Joffre *said*? What he did say we can hardly understand. It consisted of abrupt, disjointed words—"battle into which I will put my last shell—will settle the campaign—" all that, others had told the English Marshal, and had been unable to convince him. No, what really proved effective was this "presence," the real, visible passion of the man; it was the ring in the voice that revealed his sincerity, and when French merely said to him, "I will do my best," Joffre departed quite content,

for in that case, too, the tone of the reply guaranteed far more than the brief, blunt words conveyed.

Have you heard about the school at Bar-sur-Aube, where the fortunes of that day were decided? The officers of the Third Bureau occupied a big schoolroom, on the wall of which was pinned a map. On this map the progress of the enemy columns was indicated by means of long, black arrows, which all the time kept extending a little farther towards the south. Joffre would often come into this room, take a chair, and sitting astride it, gaze long and earnestly at the map without uttering a word. On the 4th of September the arrows took a sudden turn towards the southeast. It needed a stout heart to see them descend without a pang of mortal anguish. Some generals said the retreat would have to go on as far as the left bank of the Seine. A young officer who was looking at Joffre as he sat motionless and silent before those long dark lines,

was reminded of some powerful animal at bay. Without doubt at this moment he saw his battle not as an algebraist sees his problem, but like a great stag gathering himself up for a spring. The idea of the manœuvre, the overwhelming of Von Kluck's right, the formation of Manoury's army, had doubtless all been thought out by intellectual process. But the time for thinking things out was past. The Commander's sole task now was to consolidate and co-ordinate his plans as to be able to give effect to his manœuvre at the precise moment when he could be sure it would produce its maximum effect. Similarly there are great, human-hearted doctors, who, leaning over the couch of a patient they love, watch anxiously for the effects of some supreme remedy and, feeling, as it were within their own organism, the very sensations of their patient, note and observe with every fibre of their being.

The Philosopher. What you have just said pleases me very much. Like you, I

admire a "presence," and Joffre has always seemed to me to be a great "presence." Moreover, what you said about thought-action at the moment of decision being generated by a spring of the body, I have perceived very clearly in artistic creation. There is nothing finer than the eager and almost hungry look with which a great painter seems to take possession of his model. The greater writer, amid all the welter of his notes, slips of paper, and things remembered, suddenly catches a glimpse of his subject in its entirety, lit up as though by a flash-light. No doubt he will in due course have to come to the analytical expression of it, as the military chief has eventually to translate that corporal thought of his into definite commands, but that knowledge is real, and not merely notional, only if it has passed through this intuitive stage, is undoubtedly true and I do not dispute it. You see that I concede virtually all your case. However—

THE LIEUTENANT. I thought, myself, that there was bound to be an "however."

THE PHILOSOPHER. And there is. When you say that a lover knows intuitively what his mistress is about to do, that a sportsman has an intuitive knowledge of the woods, a captain of the battlefield, do you mean by that, that a magical operation suddenly introduces into their virgin mind the knowledge of the future? I think that would be a very imperfect account of what really happens. I don't ride in races, and I don't play football, but I am a sportsman, and I know the mechanism whereby a man gets the intuitions of which you speak. He knows the forest and its tracks; he knows the habits of the wild things that dwell in it; how, for example, the weather of the previous day regulates the animals' movements. If it has been raining during the day, the boar will betake himself at evening to the reed marshes to bathe himself in the pools there, and in the morning he will be found in the clearings

so as not to get wet among the bushes. The track the beaters will follow is determined by their anxiety to avoid leaving a trail and to keep clear of leaves, whose rustling would betray them. Your real hunter does not consciously think of all that just when he gives his orders, it is true; but it is because he *has* thought of it that he is able to give those orders. Great artists are great workers. Get some one to show you the notes made by Victor Hugo for one of his novels. Read the carefully worded letters of Balzac, say, or Flaubert, asking a correspondent to give them exact information regarding some technical detail of which they are ignorant. Think of Valéry, for example, patiently perfecting the mechanism of his brain by twenty years of mathematical study. So, from this perfect acquaintance with the particular department of life in which the artist desires to build, spring these creative intuitions. Napoleon, before being a great general, was a man who had stuck at his

work. He had absorbed at Brienne the military teaching of the strategists of old France, who were very great men, and there is, on the whole, very little in Napoleon's strategy which does not proceed from that source.

And no doubt study is not enough: "You can't learn to write like Homer by studying a Greek grammar." That's true enough. Nevertheless, you must learn grammar in order to write at all, and harmony in order to compose. That sort of dovetailed life of a general and his army, of a lover and his mistress, of an inventor and his machine, is only obtained by long contemplation, by profound and detailed knowledge. It is thus and only thus that you can explain the mechanism of intuition.

If by loving study, by the passionate interest with which the slightest nuances of her smile or her melancholy have inspired me, I have formed in my mind an exact notion of a woman's temperament; that mental image, will henceforth lead a life parallel with that

of the real woman, since it will be made of the same elements. I shall be capable of foreseeing the movements and actions of this fair living creature because all that determines them is present in the spiritual model of her which I bear within me and which has become a part of me. It is true that then my divination travels farther and more swiftly than logical reasoning. But of what patient logic, of what inward reasoning is that divination composed! The heart does not dispense with method; both mutually uphold and support each other and the union of the mystic and the savant forms the perfection of the human mind. And so, just as Henri Poincaré and Joseph Bertrand see, at a glance, the solution of a problem even before they have roughed out the system which led them to it, so also a Napoleon or a Foch see the manœuvre it is necessary to make, without having to express it in the form of a syllogism. But these great examples do not justify the ignorant person who

puts himself in a state of trance, looks for victory from exaltation and refuses to impregnate himself with the facts in order to receive their authentic message. "The art of war is like Achilles who was the son of a mortal and of a goddess." Neglect not the goddess!

THE LIEUTENANT. If I have done so, may she forgive me! However—

THE PHILOSOPHER. There is another "however," then?

THE LIEUTENANT. It is this. You have demonstrated very well that to make up the complete man there must be the union of the mystic and the savant; that the savant must prepare and shape, and the mystic inspire, decide; that the patience of the former is the strength of the latter. But does it not seem to you that in that very preparatory labour there is a sort of mystical action at work. Whence do such men as Pasteur, Darwin, Newton derive courage to carry out their experiments, and for a whole series of

years, to devote all their thoughts to one single, limited problem? It must be that a sort of faith supports them. Often in armies we find men whose slowness of mind causes them to be underestimated, and who nevertheless become great leaders by the mere force of their tenacity. I am thinking, for example, of such a man as Kitchener, whom I took round the French positions at Salonika. In his strategical ideas he reminded me of a good, honest N.C.O. But when once he had decided on a movement, he brought to bear on the execution of his plan a will so firm, a foresight so complete and detailed, that he very rarely failed of his object.

You remember the slow vengeance he prepared for Gordon's murderers. It was necessary to build up the Egyptian army and, with scarcely any funds, to equip it with the rejected material of the European armies and then to cause it to advance along a rocky causeway and to keep it supplied in the middle of a desert. But that was the very work

that suited Kitchener. There were some old rails that had long been buried in the mud. He had them dug up. He laid the line himself, designing the track, directing his workmen. When the line was nearly finished the Nile overflowed and carried away seven kilometres of it. He set his teeth and began all over again. At last he succeeded in getting a train along it. At the same time there reached him from England a gunboat in sections, which he had bought out of what he had managed to save on the Egyptian army estimates, and which would enable him to attack the enemy in flank. He went on board with his staff. He gave orders for the start. Suddenly there was a terrific explosion. The boiler had burst. The chief engineer came and reported that the damage was irreparable. Then, for the first time, they thought Kitchener was going to emerge from his terrible calm. His eyes grew dim. The corners of his mouth began to droop. He hurriedly went down to his cabin. Five

minutes later he came up again. The storm had passed. He gave orders to disembark and said that they would go on without the gunboat. The campaign lasted for more than a year. Finally the Mahdi was killed and with him ten thousand Dervishes. Kitchener was free to enter Khartoum. As he rode in triumph into the city he looked like a man carved in stone.

At the outbreak of war he was the only one of the great military leaders who prepared himself for a five years' struggle. When he spoke of giving England an army of three million men, the politicians smiled. Briand once said to him, "You have lived in a country where, at a word from you, the people bow down and villages spring up from the soil; you can't work miracles on the Boulevard des Italiens." Briand was wrong; miracles can be wrought in Trafalgar Square, and they could be wrought on the Boulevard des Italiens. If a man, even an ordinary man, concentrates all his forces on

a single object, he will obtain results that will appear miraculous to minds which, though they may be quicker, are devoid of heat, devoid of love. "It is this warmth of genius and this love of its object that endows it with the gift of imagining and discovering things concerning that object itself." Napoleon has laid it down that character without brains is better than brains without character. Let us put it more accurately and say that a little intelligence employed by a passionate heart will go farther than great genius placed at the service of a frigid soul.

THE PHILOSOPHER. This young sun is getting to his zenith. I fancy we must be thinking about lunch. (*They get up and walk for a few minutes in silence. When they reach the Allée des Reines,* THE PHILOSOPHER stops.) I see that it is the same with this inquiry as with all others. Whenever you think you have discovered a primary factor you find that that factor itself proves to be infinitely divisible. We have found the

secret of intuition in passionate attention, and the secret of that same attention in the ardour of genius. We must probe still farther. This warmth of heart, this ardour, this faith—of what are they composed?

Sometimes, genius is the manifestation of a painful lack of equilibrium; an unhappy passion made up of forces which it cannot employ as it would and which are diverted for the furtherance of some utilitarian object. It is easy to detect in the Treatise on Ethics the passages suggested to Spinoza by his hopeless love for Mademoiselle van den Ende, just as one can read, in Napoleon's campaign in Italy, the jealous promptings of the youthful husband. Sometimes, too, a mere physical accident will set the cerebral mechanism in motion. Of that, Pascal is the classic example. In others you might perhaps find the intelligence coming on to the scene by a subtle by-path. There are men whom a powerful argument has fired with a sudden faith. Cecil Rhodes, they say,

conceived the idea of his African Empire by listening to Ruskin holding forth at Oxford on the greatness of Britain. In the case of Lenin, the study of Karl Marx must have been his *primum mobile*.

When I met you for the first time, Stendhal, Kipling, Tolstoi, Barrès were rivals for your youthful soul and were shaping it in concert. I, too, tried to have a finger in the pie, but the war came and carried you off. Doubtless similar adventures helped your heroes. I should like to know what chance happenings, what books, what friendships shaped the souls of such men as Pétain, or Nelson or Bonaparte. As for Kitchener, I have it from an Englishman that he owed that patient force of his to a shyness so great as to cut him off from all the amenities of social life. Ennui made him in love with tasks which others, of happier temperament than he, would have regarded as irksome. The terrible silence of the shy man created that legend of severity, that protective

shield, which served him in such good stead.

In the flame which we call genius there burn simple, human passions, but a hearth of rare design, concentrating their heat on a single point, dazzles us with its ardour.

THE LIEUTENANT. What is your aim, *mon cher maître*? Are you trying to prove that the superman is not a god? That the chances of this life play a part in his composition? No doubt they do, but what does it signify? Perhaps, as you say, Bonaparte and Cæsar owed their military genius to some secret and simple cause. They knew how to command, and that is enough for me.

THE PHILOSOPHER. But not enough for me. To look at a man of genius from the outside, to accept him as a preternatural and singular phenomenon, astonishes the mind, without stimulating the courage. To realize, however, by what simple methods—by shouldering the musket, by studying the terrain—such a man as Turenne, for example, licks his own mind and his own body into

shape; how Robert Peel, trained from his childhood to fill the highest office in the State, at length becomes Prime Minister of England and one of the best of them; how the hero is always able to make his soul a dwelling-place with doors ever open to receive a visit from smiling Fortune, that is what inspires the apprentice with a sense of freedom.

Yesterday we were agreed in thinking that the signal characteristic of the great man is the certainty he possesses of being able to create the future, always, however, distinguishing, as Retz so well puts it, the extraordinary from the impossible. To-day, this last element which we have pursued together, this ultimate residue of analysis, this fine point of genius is, I believe, the twin certitude of divining one's mission and creating oneself to perform it. (*They pass out through the gates.*) You are leaving me here?

THE LIEUTENANT. I will, if I may, go a

few steps farther with you. All this is very important for me. Often when I think of the men whom I admire, I feel a sense of discouragement. In the narratives of the historians, in their own memoirs, in their portraits, they appear so perfect, so clearly and firmly outlined that, comparing this masterly picture of them with my own painful strivings, I despair of approaching them.

THE PHILOSOPHER. We must beware of bad artists. They give an appearance of fixity to things that are mobile.

THE LIEUTENANT. But what you have just said of the human elements of genius, and what I, too, divine when I come in contact with a real leader of men, the living face, the mobile expression, reassures me and gives me confidence. Not that I aim at doing great deeds, but I do not wish to doubt of my own courage, and I like the picture of the great man as you have painted it. Aye, to create oneself; and first of all to know oneself, to know that appetite for pleasure,

that anxious self-consciousness, that indolence of mind; to know them and to say them nay; to remould them as one would have them be; to remould them slowly, for our overplus of will-power is a little thing, and we can only tackle little burdens; but to know also that the growing heap of little aims accomplished will one day enable us to rear that dwelling of which you spoke; to know that a great poem, like a great battle, is the sum total of little things fulfilled; to know that the chance will come when we least expect it, and that, to be always ready, it is above all requisite that our reflexes should be in good order; to do what lies before you at whatever point you've arrived at, with a section if you are a corporal, with a company if you are a captain; but anyhow to get going, to act—yes, I should like to think that genius is just that.

THE PHILOSOPHER. Be assured, my dear friend, that it is nothing else. Good-bye.

(*He walks quickly away.*)

DIALOGUE THE THIRD

He maintained that what the world stood most in need of was Knight-errants, and that the order thereof would be re-established by him.

—CERVANTES.

AT THE PHILOSOPHER'S,
A MONTH LATER.

THE PHILOSOPHER. So you are off to-morrow?

THE LIEUTENANT. And I go without regret. The talks we have had together have been the best part of my stay. I am no longer suited to this thwarted existence. With you Europeans here, democrats and bureaucrats, a "soldier man" can get nothing done. When three months are up, an official circular comes and deprives him of the men he has just licked into shape. The only real sphere of action is politics, and politics I should make a hash of. Over in Morocco you get a few willing workers together; you plan roads, you sink wells, you disperse the brigands, you establish law and order; you are a great Hakim, and that's agreeable.

THE PHILOSOPHER. And they like you.

THE LIEUTENANT. Your men? Yes, if you deserve it. If you mean the Berbers, they admire you if you are a fine warrior, but how should they like you? The peace you impose on them interferes with their pleasures, and destroys the beautiful balance of a wholly military society. "What!" they think to themselves, "shall the braves be forbidden to shoot at one another? How, henceforth, will the women recognize a man of merit. What will become of the bards, if there be no more deeds of derring-do to sing?"

THE PHILOSOPHER. But then, O Conqueror, what is the object of conquest? The last time I saw you, I was in an accommodating humour, and suavely discussed the theory of action without calling in question its positive value. We agreed that certain men, great soldiers, statesmen, leaders of commerce, are more capable than others of stamping the imprint of their will on the

universe. With that I still agree. But I notice that the rank and file who are associated with their enterprises make them a present, occasionally, of their lives, and, always, of their freedom and leisure. We may be permitted to ask whether the game is worth the candle. Those Berbers of yours were living, in unenlightened content, in a state of lawlessness and brigandage. What advantages does your military peace give them? For centuries the Hindus had accustomed themselves to a life of indolence and danger. What real happiness do they get out of British comfort and the British police system? In the villages of Normandy and Picardy the hand-weavers plied their tasks at their own firesides. Is it a good thing that your industrial magnates have built them dismal barracks to work in? A society composed of peaceable and leisurely men, devoting themselves principally to the things of the mind, doing only sufficient manual labour to provide themselves with food, shelter and

clothing, might be far superior to a Taylorized America. Madame de Staël's delightful Germany, where indolent little Courts gave up all their time to love-making and literature, was more happy and more civilized than the mechanical Germany of Stinnes or the explosive Germany of Schlieffen. Restlessness is not an asset; activity is not a virtue. Order is a means, not an end. If the real goal is the happiness of men, do your supermen help them to attain it?

THE LIEUTENANT. It rather tickles me, *mon cher maître,* to hear you sticking up for massacre and pillage. But I never said, nor do I hold, that the goal of the superman is happiness. Order is not an end in itself, you say. Now, for minds of a certain type that it just what I think it is. To shed the light of intelligence on things that are obscure, to drive broad avenues through the trackless forest, to group and adjust divergent efforts, is both a pleasure and a necessity. Louis XIV doubtless modelled France somewhat

as he planted Versailles. The mind that planned that beautiful constellation of avenues round about the Arc de Triomphe is the self-same mind that conceived the Université, the Legion of Honour and the Conseil d'Etat. There are many characteristics common to the artist and the man of action. Each of them, being unable to endure the disorder of nature, is fain to impose on nature a system whose pattern he carries in his mind and whose lineaments are pleasing to him. The artist delights in the creation of an imaginary world, the man of action in moulding the real one. As for me, I am like an awkward child fumbling with modelling clay, but it pleases me to try my hand on the raw material round about me.

THE PHILOSOPHER. That is the reason why the artist is seldom a man of action. He finds it too easy, when the real world hampers him, to slip away into the land of illusion and there build what cloudy edifices

he will. Consider the case of d'Annunzio: the Roman firmness of his eloquence, the aerial grace of his courage, his heroic adventure at Fiume—everything seemed to herald the advent of a great leader of men. They were but coruscations—dazzling, but swiftly spent. A seasoned politician like Giolitti goes further than he in the world of realities. Why? Because with the true artist the desire for action is but fitful. He will go and bombard a town, or harangue a Roman crowd. But he looks on things like that as brief promenades in life. As soon as his puppets of flesh and blood refuse to act as he would have them act, he comes back to his world of phantoms, where he is mightier than Cæsar. Byron, when he set out for Greece, had dreams of becoming its King, but he soon got sick of the miserable creatures who fell so far short of the Greeks of Homer. Lamartine sighed with weariness when the mob broke in upon his idealistic visions of revolution.

THE LIEUTENANT. Cæsar was a man of letters.

THE PHILOSOPHER. But of little imagination.

THE LIEUTENANT. Wasn't Goethe naturally fitted to be a great statesman? "I prefer injustice to disorder," is a saying worthy of Talleyrand.

THE PHILOSOPHER. But Talleyrand wouldn't have written it. In point of fact the history of Goethe as a man of action is a brief one. What, O Man of Valour, do you think of a War Minister who, having obtained leave in order to visit Italy, writes to his prince, saying, "I have re-discovered my real *ego*. What is that? Why, an artist." All that is beside the question. Is it, I ask again, desirable that the superman should rule? What will he do for the rank and file?

THE LIEUTENANT. I should like to have seen you, *mon cher maître,* in the tall *képi* of the men who fought so well at Borny, and

Rezonville and Saint-Privat. Never, perhaps, had France had better soldiers. But those soldiers had no leader. Bazaine strode up and down the battlefield like a mighty man of valour; but he *did* the sort of thing a subaltern does. He would order a section to fire, call attention to a defect in uniform, and completely forget that he was responsible for an army. Ladmirault and Canrobert implored him to send them reinforcements and to acquaint them with his plans. It was all in vain. The chief, enveloped in a silence that may have been Machiavellian, remained a passive spectator of events. And by slow degrees, out of our inaction was engendered the triumph of the foe. Out of this formless material of the future which we were suffering to flow on without attempting to arrest it, the enemy were moulding their Empire. And yet if ever battles ought to have been won it was then. There was but one word needed: "Onward," and it would have been all over

with the Germans. Imagine what a change that would have meant in the world's history. The professional army easily crushing the nation in arms, the whole world renouncing that primitive and uncouth idea, the demagogues recoiling discomfited, and—the Great War would have been avoided. But Bazaine was a peddling plotter, not a military leader, and the fighting power of the nation was nullified by the incompetence of its general. On the 10th August, Bonaparte pityingly asked himself why there was no one to take command of those poor Swiss. "They would have conquered if they had had someone to lead them," and there again, one man would have changed the course of history. Don't you think that Rennenkampf's men, with nothing but the Mazurian marshes in their rear, would have hailed with delight the advent of a real leader?

After Turenne had been killed, his lieutenants held prolonged debates without coming to any decision, whereupon the soldiers

exclaimed, "Let old Piebald have his head, he will lead us." Piebald was the charger that the Marshal usually rode. It was about that time that a peasant of Champagne went to his overlord and asked him to cancel the lease of his farm, saying, as his only reason, "The great Turenne is dead."

The rank and file (whether military or commercial) need a certain minimum of security in order to live. When they have made such a fine hash of things that they are no longer able to find food or shelter, or to rear their children, they call loudly for the Great Organizer, the Master Magician. Our friend the manufacturer has often described to me the attitude of his men in times of crisis. In periods of prosperity the workman envies the master his lot, and would like to do without him. That is natural. Work is plentiful, profits easily earned, the leader is superfluous. Then come bad times, the scene is changed. None but the far-seeing and skilful employers can find work

for their men now, and the men look to them anxiously for help. When a nation that is attacked perceives that it is in danger of going under, be its character socialist, communist or pacifist, it gives the Commander-in-Chief *carte blanche* to do as he will with its liberties. "Paulus Æmilius declared that, having been chosen by necessity, he had no obligation towards anyone, and demanded that the people should not interfere in the war."

In 1918, one of the sections in my part of the line had had all its officers killed, and the command fell to one of the men. In an impromptu speech he tried to explain to his men that they would be his comrades as before; that he had no intention of playing the despot; that the section would be a little republic. "Right-o!" they said. "Now shut up and get on with it!"

When the pastoral tribes of Morocco are robbed by the nomads of their cattle and their wives, they are delighted at the

approach of French law and order, though ready enough to curse us when the danger is past. Don't you think that when Bonaparte came home from Egypt it was lawful for a Frenchman that loved his country, lawful even for a Royalist, to hail him as a saviour? Or to take a more recent example. How was it Mussolini was able to seize the reins of government without opposition? Because the total lack of rule had brought home to everybody's mind the advantages of a strong and stable government. It was only necessary to have seen Nitti's Italy, the lawlessness in the streets, the systematic pillage, the savagery of the women revolutionists at Milan, or that young man bound to the bridge at Florence, his hands cut off at the wrists by the rioters—that would have been enough! That is the sort of thing we must not forget when we are tempted to wonder how it is the Italian people are willing to endure the harshness of Fascist rule. It is pure sophistry to judge of acts committed

at a time of crisis, and to ignore the circumstances which gave rise to the crisis. Moreover, if Mussolini were to prove himself incapable of commanding his supporters and keeping them in order, another saviour would arise in his place. All that is as it should be. Take a burning theatre, for example. If everyone gets up and makes a rush for the doors, there will be a frightful disaster. But if someone endowed with a strong will, a powerful voice and high courage stands up on a seat, calms the people near him, gives orders, and restrains the fugitives, it is possible that the whole audience will escape with their lives. And so this is the answer I give to your question. What is it that the great man, the leader, the hero, gives to the man in the ranks? He gives him that discipline in the hour of danger, lacking which the whole army is lost.

THE PHILOSOPHER. Now that's giving a vigorous turn to the argument. But I am an unresponsive audience. You must have

a strong leader, you say, in a burning theatre, a sinking ship, a nation in peril. I have nothing to advance against that, and I willingly concede your point. But I have two important observations to add. Let us number them off; it's a habit I have, and it ought to find favour with a soldier. Number one: we don't live all our lives in burning theatres and shipwrecked vessels. Thank God we live in peace. The person of a Frenchman who uses the highways in 1923 is unquestionably more secure than human existence ever was before. It looks as though we are indebted for that to political freedom, for such a degree of security would have appeared incredible to a man of the last century. It would appear that the people of this country, with a remarkable firmness, require their public men to exhibit a sort of sporting attitude towards their adversaries. Once a certain limit is overstepped, their own friends are astonished, and the great mass of indeterminate opinion, shifting a little from

its previous position, gives the ship of State a list in the other direction. Why, in such pacific and favourable conditions, should we submit to a discipline which is only useful in exceptional circumstances? We are not a pastoral people, liable to be pillaged by wandering tribes; how and why, then, should our conduct be influenced by their example? We are not living in the days of the Directory; why should we sigh for Napoleon's return from Egypt? We are not a section of the fighting line; what then do we want with officers?

Number two: Don't you think that your men of action themselves often create the very dangers which they afterwards preserve us from? Your captains of industry are needed to control enormous factories, but do we want enormous factories? A good general was requisite to get us safely out of Gallipoli, but why did we set foot on that peninsula at all? The Russian soldiers, stuck fast in the Mazurian marshes, would

gladly have hailed a leader, you say? No doubt they would. But wouldn't they have been still better pleased with a government sensible enough to leave them alone in their isbas a thousand miles away from Mazuria?

The man whose usefulness is only manifested in national crises is naturally led to provoke those crises. I do not mean to say that, consciously and deliberately, a military faction will endeavour to bring about a war merely for the sake of winning promotion and decorations, though even that is quite on the cards. Each one of us is a pocket monster, and if I had been commanding a sector, I should no doubt have wanted to make a little attack all on my own. But let us give human nature more credit; we are at present talking of supermen, and we must regard them as unvisited by base passions. It was *unconsciously* that Agamemnon and Ulysses organized a state of things favourable to the existence of their normal activity,

and very disturbing for the Greeks and the Trojans. A military chief will invariably call for a big and well-equipped army, and the mere existence of that army will encourage that unyielding attitude which leads straight to war. Above all we must bear in mind man's universal craving for action and excitement; it urges him to the combat, not to satisfy his hatred or cruelty, but to quicken the pulse of life. It is that which makes "bulls" or "bears" of millionaire financiers who have no need and no desire to add to their wealth. It makes any soldier who is worthy of his salt long for the real and bloody battle. Why, the philosophers themselves could never exist without fierce and hard-fought conflicts concerning some dark and dubious theory. Those, however, are but wordy wars. They don't damage the spectators. The soldiers are more dangerous, because we are the pawns on their chessboards.

If this idea shocks you, transpose it to a

sphere with which you are less closely connected. Ask your friend the manufacturer if he likes to find a real leader at the head of a Trades Union. He will tell you that the professional agitator is a noxious individual, that he invents grievances when he can't find real ones, and that he must have his annual strike in order to justify his existence. All that is true, but it is no less true of the energetic man in every calling there is. That is why I like many-headed mediocrity to be in power. It is not obliged to maintain its prestige, because it never had any.

THE LIEUTENANT (*after a brief silence*). I perceive converging forces advancing to attack my positions. Permit me to locate them, in order that I may the better direct my answering fire—

(*a*) Mankind are not always passengers on a sinking ship.

(*b*) Dangers, when they exist, are often the work of the pilot himself.

On the first point I regret that I cannot

yield you a single inch. There are certainly in history epochs of equilibrium and respite; but I do not agree with you that the present time may be included among those somewhat rare periods of truce. The security of which you speak is real, but it is fragile; a year or two of weak government would suffice to imperil it by destroying the social discipline on which it is based. We are more than ever in need of leaders. Problems like the currency question, international debts, the security of Europe, require great minds for their solution. Each nation has good arguments; if we look at the matter solely from a legal or logical point of view, we might go on arguing for ever; we've got to settle things. We must have a man in each country who shall be able to say, "That's the decision," and immediately afterwards to add, "Now carry it out." Don't be alarmed, *mon cher maître,* I don't insist, I do not desire, that that man should be a soldier; but I do insist that he should have the soldierly

spirit; by that I mean courage to choose his path and courage to command.

I now turn to the second group of ideas. Some of my men of action are, you say, the cause of the ills to which they afterwards bring the cure. "Should we," you ask, "have great wars if we did not have great generals?" I confess that the question astounds me to stupefaction. Where does history show that wars have been provoked by soldiers? Wars are declared by governments, backed up by "Public Opinion." In fact the genuine soldier is frequently ignorant of the causes of the war, and does not bother his head about them. He is told "The hour has struck." He puts into practice the things he has learnt. Is he glad to be fighting? Is the electrician glad when he has to tackle a short circuit? He whistles while he is putting it right, and tries to think of something else. A young unmarried officer may perhaps enjoy himself at the beginning of a campaign but, believe me, he's soon glad enough

to get his boots off, to dive into his canteen and to taste the pleasures of life. Everything palls when you've got to do it for a living, and custom rubs the bloom off your enthusiasms. During the war, what struck us regular officers most about our territorial colleagues, was their bellicose spirit. They were always getting ready to have a smack at something. Not satisfied with fighting the enemy, they would fight each other, company against company. We regulars weren't so eager. We said to ourselves "What on earth's the matter with them? Is it business that makes them like that?" And then we used to think, "After all, in civil life, perhaps it's war all the time."

THE PHILOSOPHER. Yes, but I am talking about generals, men who have nothing to do with the rough and tumble of the thing, and you go and tell me what a lieutenant thinks who is bespattered with mud and in the thick of the mêlée himself. I don't know whether firemen are fond of

fires. I am rather afraid so. But undoubtedly the captain of the fire brigade takes a keen delight in them. The conflagration lights up his triumph. Ministers and prefects get out of the way at his command; a fine contest is that where you always win. A great leader is bound to love war; he wouldn't be human if he didn't. Leaving glory quite out of the question, war sets him free from himself and from others. Saint-Simon relates how Louvois, having been reprimanded by Louis XIV about a window that had been badly put in, said he would stir up such a war for him as would make him have need of him and forget all about trowels. "He was as good as his word. He started a war by some election affair at Cologne, and he confirmed it by carrying the flames into the Palatinate; there he did all he knew to make it general, and, had it been possible, eternal, by driving the Duke of Savoy to desperation." And all because a window was too high and his dig-

nity a little ruffled. So you see by how slender a thread hangs the tranquillity of the rank and file.

THE LIEUTENANT. May I say three things? Never, so far as I know, has the superintendent of the fire brigade been charged with arson, Saint-Simon was a bad hat, and Louvois wasn't a general.

THE PHILOSOPHER. Well, then, I will give you some other instances. Did Ludendorff urge his Emperor to make peace? Isn't he now the moving spirit of the German revenge party? Could Napoleon give up his favourite pastime? I'm not at all sure that he knew what peace really meant. "Among nations," he used to say, "there is no such thing as peace, there are only truces."

THE LIEUTENANT. Ah, but you are citing men who just missed real greatness, because they lacked one or two essential qualities. There was something of the philosopher about Napoleon, but not enough. His heart was set on that heavy ermine man-

tle, the crown and the throne. That was his weakness. We see plainly enough in Count Molé's *Memoirs* where it was the giant tottered. "He never learnt to discern the limits of the possible." Singular, isn't it, to come across one of the conclusions of our first discussion again. As for Ludendorff, the Bavarian adventure proves that the man lacks something. He leapt into it like a child, without preparation, without dignity. I am more particular where my heroes are concerned. I demand of them that, though they should take up their office without hesitation when their services are required, they should lay it down without regret when they consider themselves no longer needful. I would have them as willing to submit to reasonable authority when order is restored, as they were, in the hour of danger, to take the whole responsibility upon themselves.

This, in fact, is the attitude of great soldiers in all times. Stern and timid, bold and

modest, pitiless and kind, it is thus they will appear to you if you look at them without bias. The bonds which hold them in check have been woven ever since the dawn of history by the divinities of the home and the city. Subtle, singularly strong, yet all but invisible, these bonds tether that wonderful type, the Roman general, who fights not without consulting the augurs, the Republican general, submissive in the presence of the humblest deputy, the warrior, in short, who makes his regiments tremble, and himself trembles in the presence of his wife.

My reply to the argument which you draw from industrial life will be the same. Certainly the employer of labour would not like to see at the head of his workmen an ambitious scoundrel who looked on strike and riot as a means to advance him in his political or syndicalist career. But don't you think he would be pleased to see the office entrusted to some large-minded, modest and upright man, a man who would certainly try to ob-

tain for his men as much as he deemed possible, yet not without regard to the necessities of the industry? The truth is that it is not the cowl that makes the monk, and we must not bestow the great name of leader on those who would usurp the title without possessing the attributes.

THE PHILOSOPHER. But can a man at one and the same time bear the title and retain the attributes? Can a man possess unlimited power and at the same time practise moderation? It is the old story of the benevolent despot again; but there is no such thing as a benevolent despot. I don't remember who it was that used to say, "When I am at a loss how to judge of a man, I ask myself what he would do if he were Emperor of Rome? And forthwith a Nero, a Caligula, or a Domitian rises up before me."

THE LIEUTENANT. But also a Galba or a Marcus Aurelius. Perhaps I have too much self-confidence, but I would risk the

experiment. I am sure I should not prove a Nero.

THE PHILOSOPHER (*with a shake of the head*). Bonaparte, as a young man, would have said the same. He used to read Plutarch, and be moved by it; he had sound sense and good qualities. You have just agreed what absolute power made of him. You would not be a Nero? I hope not; I do not think you would. But you would cease to be yourself. Round about the man armed with unlimited power the passions, willy-nilly, weave their spell. Women would see to it that they corrupted you. The great leader loses touch with those tangible realities to which you would like to see him indissolubly united. He does nothing himself. He talks, he writes, and in the practice of those facile acts, he forgets, if he ever knew them, the unyielding necessities of material things. As for a voluntary retirement from the arena, I see few examples of it since Cincinnatus, and I am not surprised. What

has a leader to do with dreams of repose? Even if he is not ambitious, he deems himself necessary to his people's welfare. "What are we going to do," says the general staff, "when you are no longer with us?" "What indeed," says the great leader; "it troubles me to think of it."

THE LIEUTENANT. It seems to me, *mon cher maître,* that in this matter you are guilty of those fatalistic ideas which just now we unanimously condemned. You talk about mechanical inevitability, about human nature being always unchangeably true to type. But is not human nature what man wills it to be? Doubtless it is very human to grasp at power; but it is also human to renounce it; to set the peace of one's country and one's own inward tranquillity above personal glory. Of that I can give you ten examples more modern than Cincinnatus. Do you know anything about the life of Maréchal Bugeaud?

THE PHILOSOPHER. No, nothing except

Abd-el-Kader, the Cap, and the little fragment of a speech which you read to me the other day.

THE LIEUTENANT. Well, then, after Waterloo, Bugeaud, a brilliant young colonel, was informed by the King's Government that his services were no longer required, and he thought his career was at an end. He retired to his little family estate, doffed his uniform, and bravely settled down to a farmer's life. It was in Périgord, and he found himself master of a stretch of heath dotted all about with dusty briars, land as hard as though it had been baked in a furnace, a piece of swampy meadowland, and roads furrowed with quagmires. "Ah well!" says he, "my day is over; the little things I know about handling infantry won't be any good to me here. All the same I've still got troops to command—five hundred sheep, a score of cows, and three domestics. That's a tidy regiment to go on with."

In fifteen years he had reclaimed the land

and made himself the idol of the villagers. Everywhere now were to be seen flourishing wheatfields, comfortable homesteads, well-clad peasants, good hard roads, and it was all Bugeaud's doing. Then came the July Revolution. He was appointed a deputy, and at the same time a general. But the pacific policy of Louis Philippe had no more staunch supporter than this man of arms. (*Here* THE LIEUTENANT *picks up his notebook from* THE PHILOSOPHER'S *mantelpiece and rapidly turns the leaves.*) In 1831, when the newspapers were all clamouring for war with Europe, Bugeaud writes thus: "Even if the country wanted war, that should not influence the Government, because the masses reason about these things as a blind man argues about colours. Look at the lives and the treasure that would be wasted, the suffering that would be entailed. The advantages would be dearly paid for. True, I personally should stand to gain. I should either be killed or promoted. And yet I do

not want it, for above everything I dread civil war and anarchy in a Republic." In 1840, when there was a talk of making war with England for the benefit of Mahomet Ali, he said, addressing the Chamber, "We ought not to involve our country in a mighty struggle save for a mighty cause. The honour of nations differs from the honour of individuals." In Algeria, no sooner did he see a chance of negotiating than he seized it. "I sacrificed certain victory to what seemed to me to be in accord with the real interests of the country. . . . It was less showy, but more wise. I know I shan't be popular, and that is why there may be some little merit in acting as I did." Such was the conduct of the greatest French general of the nineteenth century, and I see that I have written down in my book, immediately underneath, an extract from an old book, which applies very well to Bugeaud. It is taken from a *Treatise on War in General*, by an officer of dis-

tinction in the service of the most Christian King":

"It is necessary that a general should be one of those types who, content with themselves, hold as beneath them all those riches and honours which are the delight of baser minds; that when there comes to him what the general mass of people call misfortune, he should still be the same, and as contented in adversity as in prosperity, that he should know how to live in obscurity on a thousand crowns a year as well as if he had a hundred thousand, making his riches and his fortune consist in the sole satisfaction of having commanded the armies in a worthy manner. It is on these principles that a general should be established."

It was on these principles, it seems to me, that the best generals of the war were "established." Fayolle cultivates his roses, Pétain his vines, and Joffre, when he was asked to represent the Academy at the anniversary of the Marne answered: "But what, then?

Is this sort of thing going to take place every year?" The really great man does not demean himself by bending a doddering knee to fame. You say that flatterers corrupt him, but, if he is really great, flatterers bore him. "It must be a delightful thing to be famous," said one of them to Wellington. "Yes," answered the Duke, "it allows me to brush my own clothes without anybody regarding it as ridiculous."

The other day I saw Joffre arriving at the Invalides. He was in civilian clothes, and he had come on foot. He shut his umbrella with great care, so as not to let it drip on his well polished boots. Then he started off along the corridors. The sentries hardly gave him room to pass. It made me feel uncomfortable. I felt like getting in front of him and calling out, "Make way for the Maréchal, there!"

You tell me that the unselfishness of a Bugeaud, the modesty of a Joffre, are virtues rarely met with. I quite agree. They are

as rare as the real leader himself is rare, but in him they are always found. It is because he possesses them that he is what he is. An almost mechanical justice rewards true greatness, even in this world's affairs. The Quakers forbade their adherents to take large profits. That inhibition made their fortune.

THE PHILOSOPHER. That is a delightful piece of optimism, a fine subject for an allegorical ceiling in the New York Chamber of Commerce, "Virtue conducting Fortune to the abode of the Righteous Man." Plato, like you, says that the most just are in reality the strongest, because Justice, Competence and Order are the only real forces. And doubtless you are right, you and Plato, if you place yourself at the point of view of the Eternal Spectator, of the historian who, a hundred years after the death of a great man, addresses himself at his leisure to the task of deciding whether his work was really great or destined to fade away. Then it is

that you perceive that errors carry with them their own retribution, that a bullying Government falls to the ground, and that an institution does not long survive the decay of its own usefulness. But unjust success may flourish for fifteen years, or a whole lifetime, and during those periods, short enough in comparison with eternity, but long for him that has lived through them, countries will be governed by unworthy or cruel men. Frederick the Great was a bad man; spiteful, avaricious, mean. None the less he founded a great kingdom. Some men of affairs have, you say, succeeded owing to the beauty of their character. Possibly; but you will scarcely maintain that every millionaire is a saint. The greatness of such a man as Turenne, or Gallieni, welds a bond between the leader and his followers. But corruption produces the same effect, and so do fear and crimes wrought in common. Napoleon distributed honours and rewards. You may be sure he was loved none the less for that.

Among those who have kindled the enthusiasm of their followers there have been men of every sort, from the lowest to the highest. Moreover, I call on you to bear witness to yourself. You have no love for the men of the Revolution. But will you deny their power over the mind of their countrymen?

THE LIEUTENANT. A power that did not last. As far back as Thermidor, Paris had grown sick of the excesses of the Mountain. The workpeople of the Faubourg Antoine closed their shutters when the tumbrils went by, and after forty years of the republican régime you might look in vain throughout Paris for a street, or even a blind alley, bearing the name of Robespierre.

THE PHILOSOPHER. You loathe and despise the actors in the Russian Revolution. Yet it seems to be firmly established. As to the forebodings with which the One Strong Man inspires me, you would comfort me with the assurance that he is not dangerous, because he is perfect. Confess, now, that

there is some room for doubt on that score. You ascribe to him, with some degree of plausibility, the attributes of the artist, but it often happens in the artist's case that passion for his work engenders egoism and even a kind of cruelty. Rossetti sacrificed his wife for his poetry. Bonaparte sacrificed his soldiers to his system, and Lenin sacrificed Russia to Karl Marx. Such fierce tenacity is not without its grand side, but the man in the street would sooner have the Third Republic.

THE LIEUTENANT. Is there not a little misunderstanding between us, *mon cher maître*? I cannot believe that you are for confounding Authority with Tyranny. This discussion has been such a long one, and we have sometimes drifted so far from our course, that I think I must recapitulate. These, then, are the successive stages of my argument:

1. I think that for every undertaking which calls for the collective action of men,

the men should place themselves under the control of a single leader. Without such a leader, speeches, discussions and quarrels occupy time that can never be recovered; opportunities are lost, and the most stable and charming conditions of life slip quickly away into the limbo of neglected things.

2. As regards this leader, this indispensable leader to whom democracies themselves are compelled to have recourse, there are two attitudes possible: one, loyalty, the other, mistrust. The former alone strikes me as helpful and generous.

3. As to the mode of choosing a leader, I have, of course, my own ideas, and I will unfold them to you some day. But my horror of anarchy is so great that I am always prepared to support the *de facto* leader, and to uphold him, so long as he has not proved by inactivity, cowardice or cruelty that he is unworthy to govern.

But that, save in the midst of a crisis, the leader should have to conform to certain

laws, to a charter, that I grant you with all my heart. What I maintain is that an assembly, excellently qualified as it is to keep a watchful eye on things, is always ill-adapted to act; and that is because the secret of defeat is the divided command; because a group is never capable of giving orders, not even for a luncheon. Do not forget that, had it not been for a few choice spirits, the Third Republic would undoubtedly be to-day the appanage of the German Empire or, Poland having been crushed, the bondslave of Lenin's Guards. I do not ask you to repose a blind and unlimited trust in the man of action, but I do ask that your attitude towards him should not be marked by an *a priori* mistrust and an unjust ingratitude. Absence of respect, abhorrence of rule and authority, these are new and detestable traits. In the days of Chivalry, the men loved their leaders. The Greeks of the Iliad respected Achilles. The Greeks of the decadence could prate of nothing but liberty.

You were quoting Plato just now. In the *Republic* there is an admirable passage on that theme. You no doubt know it by heart, but I should like to read it again for my own pleasure. It is where he explains how democracy itself may give rise to tyranny.

THE PHILOSOPHER (*going up to his bookcase*). Wait; yes, it's in Book VIII. This is it: "Is it not this love of freedom carried to excess and the neglect of other things, that brings democracy to nought and occasions a demand for a tyranny?" (*He holds out the book to* THE LIEUTENANT, *with his finger on the passage.*)

THE LIEUTENANT (*continuing*). "When a democracy which is thirsting for freedom has evil cup-bearers presiding over the feast, and has drunk too deeply of the strong wine of freedom, then, unless her rulers are very amenable and give a plentiful draught, she calls them to account and punishes them, and says they are cursed oligarchs— Now in such a State, can liberty have any limit?

By degrees the anarchy finds a way into private homes; the father grows accustomed to descend to the level of his sons and to fear them, and the son is on a level with his father, he having no respect or reverence for either of his parents. In the domain of education, the master fears and flatters his scholars, and the scholars despise their masters and tutors. It extends to the relations between husband and wife, and even to the very animals; the horses and asses, accustomed to march along head in air and caring for no one, run into all the people they meet, if they don't get out of the way."

THE PHILOSOPHER. Oh, yes! I know well enough that Plato is one of your men, but the very fact that he wrote what he did should be a proof to you that the desire for equality is not, as you described it, a disease of modern times. Homer's Greeks would have rivalled any barrack-room malcontent in the matter of grousing, and after every abortive attack, began to talk about

getting back to their many ships. The Roman Plebs every twenty years had their little outbreak against the Patricians.

The phenomenon comes and goes with a more or less regular rhythm. A ruling class rises into power by reason of the services it renders, either because it fights for the rest of the community or because it directs their labours. It is obeyed and respected because it is indispensable. The condition of equilibrium thus obtained is inevitably upset, first (and in this you are right), because the governed class forgets that the peace which it enjoys is the work of the governors, and, secondly, because the aristocracy itself forgets in a few generations that the privileges it possessed were but the reward of the services it had rendered. It claimed to retain the privileges without paying the price. The great French landed aristocracy, at first consisting of warriors, was afterwards composed of landowners residing amidst their property. They were good administrators,

and, as such, they were respected. But when this aristocracy went to live at Versailles, the revolution was accomplished. The great captain of industry who starts factories, the man who invents or creates, is very rarely hated by his workmen. His grandson goes and lives in Paris, and loses that human contact which residence among the men alone can give. Among the primitive peoples, custom demanded that the chief should be put to death when he became too old to lead the tribe into battle. It was done with much politeness and ceremony, and under a cloak of religion, but the real object was a practical one. Nowadays it is no longer a man's age which renders the sacrifice necessary, because physical strength has no longer any political value. It is when a class or race is tainted with age that its subjects are compelled to crown it with the sacred fillets and to lead it with becoming chants to the Stone Altar or the Tcheka.

THE LIEUTENANT. Nothing could be

more just, but the object of sacrificing the chief is to set up another one, younger, more despotic and more stern, not your many-headed mediocrity.

One day, in Morocco, I had to take up the duty of a captain who had been killed in action, and who had been very popular with his men. I gave my first command to a young Berber horseman. He looked long at me. At length, without obeying, without stirring, he answered me and said: "My Captain is dead." There are times when a whole country grows thoughtful and says: "My Captain is dead." It does not betoken lack of discipline. I gather from what you said that an aristocracy, if it is to endure, must guarantee the permanence of those qualities which brought it into power. There is no reason why the grandson should be less esteemed by his soldiers, or his workmen, than the grandfather. I know something about the men recently promoted from Saint-Cyr, the Polytechnique and the Centrale.

Their characters appeal to me. These young men are above everything anxious to avoid emphasis in the expression of their feelings. In their horror of appearing high-brow many of them adopt an air of levity. But underneath this veil of nonchalance, you are conscious of hidden fires. Sometimes I think I should like to see these young men banding themselves together in a sort of Order of Chivalry, taking upon themselves special vows and obligations, and subjecting themselves to sterner laws than those that bind the common run. These are the principles on which to base an aristocracy. Then the common soldier, his mind at rest, would confess his real leaders.

(*He looks at his watch, and starts up from his seat.*)

THE PHILOSOPHER (*who for some moments past has been gazing attentively at his friend's young, chiselled face*). "A spirit in which is inborn the love of all the refinements can find no joy in a system that subverts them

all." You are an aristocrat, as I am a Radical, by temperament, and by taste; that is irremediable; besides, it needs all sorts to make a world. I hope the day will never come when I shall see you, in steel helmet, ready to charge as I look down from the barricade to which my political passions, which are ardent, will have led me.

THE LIEUTENANT (*half smiling, half serious*). How young you keep, *mon cher maître.*

THE PHILOSOPHER. Yes, although for some few years past I have found myself dragging my leg every now and again—an old campaigner's affectation. But my heart is still going strong.

THE LIEUTENANT (*standing by the mantelpiece*). I am glad to have seen you again. You rattle my ideas a little, but I manage to restore the line once more. It is perhaps a little less rigid. All the better. Everything must allow a little for warping.

(*He picks up his képi and his gloves,*

lingers as if he were loath to depart, and moves slowly towards the window.)

How beautiful it is, this billowing sea of roofs which mounts up as if to storm your study. In a few days I shall see the sun setting in a sky of adorable green. A flock of white ibis will be flying over the plain above the Sultan's garden. I shall behold Marrakech, its rose-red walls, its terraces. After that my orders are for the South.

(*He comes away from the window, looks at his master with a smile, and holds out his hand.*)

THE PHILOSOPHER (*with a note of inquiry in his voice*). Au revoir?

THE LIEUTENANT (*in tones of cheery confidence*). Au revoir!

(1)

THE END

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